the weekly Standard

NOVEMBER 27, 2006 $3.95

ANOTHER FRENCH REVOLUTION?
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HOLDING RAMADI

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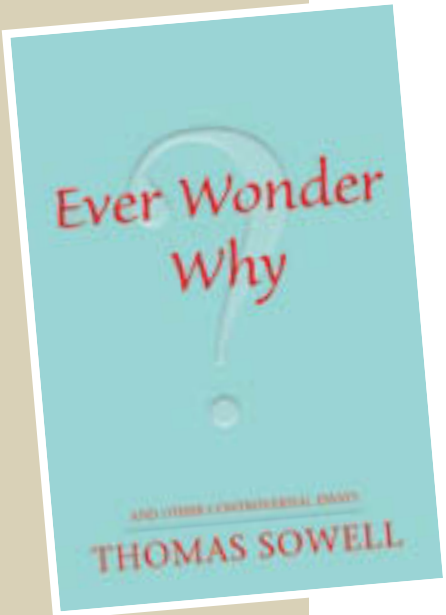

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Thomas Sowell *is the Rose and Milton Friedman Senior Fellow on Public Policy at the Hoover Institution. His nationally syndicated column is carried in 150 newspapers across the country.*

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Remembering Corporal Dunham

Next to being elected president, the greatest honor bestowed on an American is the Congressional Medal of Honor, awarded for extraordinary courage in battle. A Medal of Honor winner is so venerated in the military that officers stand up when an enlisted medal recipient enters a room. The award is not given out lightly. In World War I, 124 Medals of Honor were awarded. In World War II, with millions mobilized, only 464 were. In Korea, there were 132 recipients. In Vietnam, 245 Medals of Honor were bestowed.

In Iraq, there'd been only one, Sgt. Paul Ray Smith, whose valor in the early days of the war was recounted in these pages last year by Fred Barnes ("A War Without Heroes? Only If You're Reading the Mainstream Media," December 26, 2005). Then, on November 10, President Bush announced that a second Medal of Honor for bravery in Iraq would be awarded (posthumously, like Sgt. Smith's) to Marine Corporal Jason Dunham.

In April 2004, Dunham was struggling in hand-to-hand combat with a terrorist. When the terrorist rolled a grenade near his fellow Marines, the president said, "Corporal Dunham did not hesitate. He jumped on the grenade to protect his fellow Marines. He used his helmet and his body to absorb the blast." He died so that members of the Marine squad he led would live. Bush got choked up as he talked about Dunham.

Dunham's story was news, especially since the medal is awarded so rarely. The Associated Press wrote a story about Dunham. The *Washington Post* ran a brief story. Katie Couric mentioned Dunham on the CBS Evening News. On NBC's morning *Today* show, Campbell Brown interviewed Dunham's parents.

But America's supposed paper of record, the *New York Times*, took no notice of the award in its nationally circulated print edition. (The paper ran a short AP story online.) The rarity of the award argued for front-page treatment, and one of the *Times*'s rivals, the *New York Post*, put Dunham on page one. The *Times*'s other rival, the *Daily News*, found room for *two* stories—one on the president's announcement and another on how the news was greeted in Dunham's hometown of Scio, N.Y. Everyone knows the *Times* is antiwar. That doesn't make ignoring a home-state Medal of Honor winner any less unprofessional. ♦

Milton Friedman, 1912-2006

Commentators more expert than The Scrapbook will be needed to reckon with the technical achievements of Milton Friedman—the 1976 winner of the Nobel Prize for economics. But if Friedman was widely celebrated on the occasion of his death last week, it was not for his having elaborated the quantity theory of money or refined the consumption function. Rather, it was because he shared with fellow free-market Nobelist Friedrich Hayek a gift for popularization that rivaled his economic genius. What Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* was for the World War II generation—a lonely lighthouse of freedom piercing the fog of socialism—Milton Friedman's 1980 PBS series *Free to Choose* was for all who suffered through the economic sclerosis and stagflation of the 1970s.

It is easy to forget nowadays, when both parties are more or less persuaded of the benefits of free markets, that as recently as 30 years ago, it was the other way around: Both parties were more or less enamored of Washington's heavy hand on the levers of economic policy. Indeed, it was a Republican president of that era who imposed federal wage and price controls when his "jawboning" against rising prices came to nought, and another Republican who thought it enlightened policy to give a speech urging his fellow Americans to "whip inflation now."

Milton Friedman was as responsible as any individual for overturning this horrendous bipartisan consensus; for that and much else besides he deserved the gratitude of his fellow citizens (as well as the billions of other people around the globe who benefit from a vibrant U.S. economy).

For its part, The Scrapbook will also remember Friedman as the subject of "Production Lost," a brilliant parody of a different Milton's "Paradise Lost," published in the January 1980 *American Spectator* by our friend Andy Stark. An excerpt:

So asked economists of the fallen seventies of the archeconomist Milton:
"Our inflation is infinite, our unemployment immense.
How can we many goods produce,
And have instability turn to stability?"
"Be sure it will," replied Milton. "But from Chicago
We to you a comforter will send:
Monetarism; a theory which, combined with
The spirit of frugality and the law of self-reliance, with all men
Working with entrepreneurial ardor, will succeed, with
No guidelines, no make-work,
No welfare nor the irresistible drive
To print money to quench the fiery demands of Congress.
Monetarism will stand against them, not afraid
To insist that laziness ought not be recompensed.
And no more shall Congress send,
To evangelize the nations, money to those not
Baptized in the religion of Democracy,
Nor with wondrous gifts them endow. . . ." ♦

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The Prizes of Franklin

Our attention was drawn this week to the award of the John W. Kluge Prize for the Study of Humanity to the historian John Hope Franklin. The Kluge prize, named for the Metromedia mogul who endowed it, is awarded annually by the Library of Congress and is, in the words of Librarian James H. Billington, "the only global award given at the level of the Nobel Prizes that recognizes a lifetime of accomplishment in humanities and social sciences." The Scrapbook assumes there's a plaque or glass bowl or something, but the main scratch is a check for one million simoleons.

Needless to say, The Scrapbook was relieved to get these tidings because, frankly, we had been worried that there might be a prize somewhere out there that Dr. Franklin has not won.

For since publishing *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* in 1947, Dr. Franklin has been awarded (in addition to the usual hundred-plus honorary degrees, organizational presidencies, visiting lectureships, and appointments to advisory boards, delegations, and commissions) the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Jefferson Medal of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* Gold Medal for the Dissemination of Knowledge, the Charles Frankel Prize, the Gold Medal for History of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Cosmos Club Award, the Clarence L. Holte Literary Prize, the Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award, the NAACP's Spingarn Medal, the Organization of American Historians' Award for Outstanding Achievement, the Cleanth Brooks Medal of the Fellowship of Southern Writers, the W.E.B. DuBois Award of the Fisk University Alumni Association, the Alpha Phi Alpha Award of Merit, and the Trumpet Award of the Turner Broadcasting Corporation.

That's a partial list, by the way, and just from the past few years.

Of course, The Scrapbook would never dream of telling the Nobel Peace Prize people in Oslo how to do their job, but we have a piece of advice: Dr. Franklin is 91 years old, and it would be pretty embarrassing to deny him an honor that has gone to the likes of Jody Williams, Jimmy Carter, and Le Duc Tho. ♦

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The Weekly Standard is seeking an advertising account executive who will sell pages in the magazine and space on our website, *www.weeklystandard.com*, and in our weekly email newsletter. This person will manage our online sales effort and be an essential part of our ad sales team, which includes representatives in Chicago, San Francisco, and Toronto. Top candidates for this position will be personable, reliable, organized, and—not least—love the thrill of closing a sale! If you think you are up to the challenge of this job, email a cover letter with résumé to Associate Publisher Peter Dunn, *pdunn@weeklystandard.com*. ♦

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Casual

Cleaning Up My Act

Roughly three months ago, I resolved to stop swearing. Not that I used profanity relentlessly, but I had begun to notice that I was availing myself of it more and more—and doing so in situations where I used to be more restrained: among what used to be called mixed company.

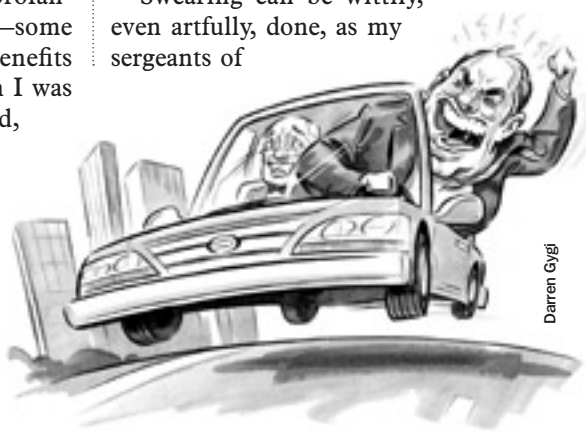
Lots of women have now taken to swearing. The right to use profanity is, I suppose, one of the—some would say highly dubious—benefits of women's liberation. "When I was young," Tom Lehrer has said, "there were so many words you couldn't use in the presence of a girl. Now you can use them all, but you better not call her a girl." Too true.

I decided to banish profanity from my conversation because it began to seem indecorous, especially in a man who is a grandfather. A clue that it was time to cease was when I began to part words in the middle with the F-word: as in unf—believable. Besides, I didn't want my deathbed words to include profanity.

Precocious in small vices, I learned swearing at an all-boys camp in Eagle River, Wisconsin, to which I was sent when I was eight years old. I never swore around my parents, of course, or around girls. Most of my bad language, as swearing used to be called, was done on various athletic fields, in locker rooms, and around pals.

My use of profanity increased in high school, where swearing and cigarette-smoking were taken as early, if obviously bogus, evidence of manhood. Hard to imagine going without swearing in the U.S. Army; apart perhaps only from seminaries, any all-male environment is fertile ground for profanity. (Men are brutes, in case you didn't notice.) Certain of my basic-training sergeants taught me that swearing could be put to comic purposes; they seemed to specialize in inserting profanity into sentences that also included the words "behooves" and "mandatory," and to do so with a rhythmical nicety that always delighted.

Swearing can be wittily, even artfully, done, as my sergeants of those days regularly demonstrated. When I was in high school, I worked briefly for a fat man who swore chiefly from behind the wheel of his car, where much profanity gets uttered even by otherwise mild-mannered people. Once, when a man about to pass on his left honked at him, he quickly rolled down his window to riposte, "Blow it out your duffelbag, farthead."


Darren Gygi

I've never been complimented on the artfulness of my profanity. But if it wasn't artful, I do like to think it was at least mildly discriminating. I never liked and very rarely used the dysphemism for anus (itself a sufficiently ugly word); I steered clear of all the slang words for female private parts, though not of the many more in use for male parts. Never in earnest have I attached the prefix mother to the F-word. I should have liked to have invented a new swear word, but failed to do so.

I do, though, believe I hold the record for using the F-word more times in a single piece in the London *Times Literary Supplement* than any other contributor. The occasion was my review of the first volume of J.E. Lighter's *Historical Dictionary of American Slang*, which stopped at the letter G and contained no fewer than twelve pages on the F-word. What is it about the need so many Americans have for this word, so that it has four not-quite-adequate substitutes: effing, friggin', freakin', and flamin'? Perhaps it's the word's rhythm that makes it so fine an emphasizer.

I wrote the foreword for the new *Yale Dictionary of Quotations*, where quotations using the F-word and other profanities have been permitted entry. (As they also have in the most recent edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*.) The reason behind allowing this is, such have been the changes in the tone and temper of contemporary culture, that not permitting them would constitute prudery, and so it probably would.

Still, when I edited *The American Scholar*, I refused to allow profanity in its pages. Not much was offered, but when I struck profane words from manuscripts I instructed the authors to take comfort by telling them how unusual they were to find themselves censored so late in the twentieth century.

As for curbing my own use of profanity in speech, it has been largely successful, with only very occasional slippages. I no longer use profanity, but the problem is that, like old Jimmy Carter walking around with lust in his heart, I still cannot stop thinking in profanity. I'm like the old European immigrant who forces himself to speak only English but still dreams in his native language.

Joseph Epstein

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THERE IS ONE ISSUE THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS CAN AGREE ON NOW:

ENDING THE GENOCIDE IN DARFUR.

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President Bush and Congressional leaders must join together now to push for the immediate deployment of a strong, UN-led peacekeeping force to protect the people of Darfur and re-energize the peace process. In order to be effective, this force will need:

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Al Qaeda's Vietnam?

In "No Third Way in Iraq" (Nov. 13) Frederick W. Kagan mischaracterizes those who have advocated a policy of strategic redeployment as a way to deal with the quagmire in Iraq. The failure of the Iraqi government and the Iraqi army to adequately "stand up" is a direct result of our open-ended commitment to fostering a culture of dependency. The purpose of redeployment is to give the Iraqi political leaders the incentives to make the political compromises necessary to, as Kagan notes, "undertake painful and difficult political bargaining" that will create an Iraqi government that the Iraqi security forces will be willing to fight and die for. As seen by the recent battle for Baghdad, where only two of the six Iraqi brigades showed up, without an Iraqi government that the Iraqi public and its security forces believe in, more training or more American logistical support will have little effect.

The United States is not simply dealing with only one security challenge in Iraq but five: a Shiite-Sunni civil war in Baghdad and Central Iraq, intra-Shiite conflict in the south, a Sunni insurgency in the west, Arab-Kurdish violence in the north, and instability on Iraq's northern border. When Kagan argues that pulling U.S. forces back to bases will accelerate sectarian violence, he ignores that the pullback is already happening and that much of what Kagan suggests will happen is already occurring, even with U.S. troops present.

Kagan's claim that the U.S. troops are not the main irritant is demonstrably false. Most major surveys of Iraqis show an increasing number of all Iraqis approving of attacks on U.S. troops and believing the security situation will be better if U.S. troops leave (this is especially true among Sunni Arabs). Furthermore, the recent GAO report on Iraq shows that attacks on U.S. and coalition troops constitute the majority of all attacks, and that there are more attacks on coalition troops than in the past. Additionally, 78 percent believe the U.S. military presence is probably causing more violence than it is preventing; 71 percent want us out within a year; and, most ominously, 61 percent approve of attacks on Americans.

Kagan underestimates the impact of the war on the U.S. Army and overstates the impact of a strategic redeployment on U.S. national security. Two-thirds of the active U.S. Army combat units are currently classified as not ready for combat, and the Army National Guard is in even worse shape. The Army has even struggled to maintain its enlisted numbers, lowering its standards and granting waivers to almost one out of every five recruits and cutting in half the number who wash out in basic training. Kagan also overstates the logistical difficulties of redeploying American forces. Their numbers can be drawn down simply by not replacing units on a one-to-one basis when their tour in Iraq is completed.

Redeploying from Iraq is in our national interest: Not only will it allow us to put more forces into Afghanistan and ensure that we have a military option for dealing with Iran and North Korea, it will weaken al Qaeda. As Ralph Peters wrote on November 2 in *USA Today*, Iraq is "al Qaeda's Vietnam. They're the ones who can't leave and can't win," because 94 percent of the Iraqis do not support them.

Lawrence Korb
Brian Katulis
Center for American Progress
Washington, D.C.

Frederick W. Kagan responds: Lawrence Korb and Brian Katulis have given up on Iraq. Their discussion of "incentivizing" Iraqis is simply cover for accepting defeat. They point out that sectarian violence is already rising even with U.S. troops there. Quite right—because the coalition is making no direct effort to establish security that would halt that violence. But what would happen if we left? The recent testimony of the CENTCOM commander and the directors of the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency—and ample evidence from countless soldiers now in Iraq—make it clear: Sectarian violence will soar, the government and army will collapse, and regional chaos and conflict will ensue. Korb and Katulis offer no evidence that anything good will come from a withdrawal, because there is no such evidence to be had. We may or may not win if we stay in Iraq. If we leave now, we will definitely lose.

Penn's Halloween Party

Your Nov. 13 Scrapbook item about a University of Pennsylvania student who dressed up for Halloween as an Arab suicide bomber mentioned that "sympathizers of suicide-bombers in the Middle East routinely show solidarity with their 'freedom fighters' by dressing children up in the same type of costumes, complete with plastic dynamite and fake AK-47s." Today's Arab terrorists are not the first to encourage children to take part in violence. At a press conference in 1934, President Franklin Roosevelt pointed out that one of the most frightening omens of German aggression was the message of militarism and martyrdom the Nazis were imparting to German children. To illustrate his point, FDR told an anecdote about a little German boy so inculcated with Nazi propaganda that each night he prayed, "Dear God, please permit it that I shall die with a French bullet in my heart." Not many people paid attention to those warning signs in the 1930s. Will our generation repeat that mistake?

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the weekly Standard

Time for a Heavier Footprint

General John Abizaid, the commander of U.S. Central Command and the man with overall statutory responsibility for conducting the war in Iraq, testified last week in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Before coming to Washington, Abizaid had spent several days in Iraq, consulting with the military commanders on the ground. Considering the importance of this testimony and the effort Abizaid made to prepare for it, it is unfortunate that he offered an inadequate proposal for change in response to the deteriorating situation in Iraq.

Abizaid has been in command of this war for three years. General George Casey, commander of U.S. forces in Iraq and Abizaid's direct subordinate, has had his command since mid-2004. Both men remember the war in Iraq at its lowest point—when the Sunni Arab insurgency raged unchecked, insurgents controlled Falluja, Shiite troops under Moktada al-Sadr seized Najaf, and Shiites in Sadr City rose in rebellion. They watched Iraqi troops flee battlefields and refuse to fight. They watched as U.S. Marines engaged in clearing Falluja were forced to desist because of political pressure from a weak Iraqi government. All of that happened in 2004.

Since then, they have seen improvements. Falluja was cleared in late 2004 and has been held. Tal Afar, cleared unsuccessfully twice before, was finally cleared and an effective government established in 2005. Mosul soon followed. The Iraqi military that failed in 2004 was disbanded and replaced by Iraqi units that have subsequently fought well in Tal Afar, Ramadi, Baghdad, and elsewhere. No major Iraqi cities are under the control of insurgents as Falluja and Tal Afar once were. The Iraqi government has supported a number of clear-and-hold efforts around the country, including in many neighborhoods in Baghdad. All these developments are important and even heartening judged against the calamitous situation we faced in 2004.

But Abizaid and Casey are now captive of their successes. They are rightly impressed by these improvements and hope that continuing the policy that brought them will lead to further successes. They see validation for their conviction that victory lies first, last, and always with the Iraqis. They also have an almost theological devotion to the "light footprint" theory that U.S. troop presence and visibility need to be minimized, and to the "dependency" theory that too many U.S. troops provide an excuse for Iraqis not to step up.

Abizaid and Casey haven't rethought these views even as they've been mugged by the reality that lack of security does more damage than a heavy footprint, and that failure is more of a threat to responsible Iraqi behavior than dependency. But, just as important, they underestimate the changes that have occurred in Iraq since the February bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra—changes that threaten to unravel the successes achieved so far. In response to the clear fact that sectarian violence is unhinging the effort to turn responsibility for security over to the Iraqis, Abizaid simply demands an acceleration of that transition. This is a recipe for disaster.

The good news, at least, is that Abizaid and Ambassador David Satterfield, the State Department's Coordinator for Iraq, rejected outright any notion of immediate reductions in American forces in Iraq. Any such reductions, they declared, would seriously undermine the Iraqi government, spur sectarian violence, create safehavens for al Qaeda, and lead to a humanitarian catastrophe. For similar reasons they rejected any idea of partitioning Iraq, which would lead to unacceptable violence and human suffering. Abizaid also rejected out of hand any notion of "re-deploying" U.S. forces to Guam, Kuwait, or anywhere else. A reduction in the American military presence in Iraq, he declared, would lead to rapid defeat.

He then proposed a solution to the crisis in Iraq today that seemed to many senators—most notably, John McCain—wholly inadequate. He listed a number of things that the Iraqi government must do—purging the Iraqi Army and National Police of those who would incite rather than control sectarian violence, disarming militias, accelerating the training and equipping of Iraqi forces, and so on. He identified only one thing that the

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United States must do: increase its efforts to train and equip the Iraqi military. To that end, the only concrete suggestion he offered was to increase the number of U.S. soldiers embedded in Iraqi military units. He specifically rejected the idea that the United States should undertake expanded efforts to establish security in Iraq, declaring that the Iraqis must do that for themselves, and he stated that it was the "professional opinion" of his commanders in Iraq that no more American soldiers were needed there.

The senators pressed Abizaid about the timeline for success. He said that it was important to get Baghdad under control within four to six months, and that the Iraqis must do it. But it is very hard to be sanguine that the situation in Iraq will hold for half a year at the present level of violence in the capital. We must also keep in mind that violence in Baghdad—and around the country—has been rising, rather than falling. Abizaid's confidence that we can afford to wait six months to address this problem is unfounded and misplaced.

Abizaid's optimism about the Iraqi military's ability to accomplish the tasks he is setting for it is also misplaced. It will take time to locate and train additional U.S. soldiers to embed with Iraqi units. It will take more time for those embedded soldiers to bring the Iraqi units to a higher level of military capability. Providing equipment to the Iraqis, including the necessary spare parts and ammunition, will take time. Familiarizing them with the equipment and with how to use it effectively in combat will take more time. Developing the logistical systems necessary to sustain Iraqi units in combat will take still more time. Even if Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki agreed tomorrow to purge the Iraqi army and police of rogue elements, doing so would take time, as would finding replacements and retraining units distorted by the presence of such leaders. A significant increase in the capabilities of the Iraqi military and security forces is almost certain to take months. Only then, according to Abizaid, should the clearing and holding of Baghdad begin. That process will take additional months—we've been working on it, after all, since August 8, when the most recent effort, Phase II of Operation Together Forward, began. So Abizaid's Iraqi-centered scenario for progress is, simply put, unrealistic in the short term.

And that's only with respect to Baghdad. Apart from Falluja and Ramadi, the largest cities in the province, to be sure (see Michael Fumento's "Holding Ramadi" elsewhere in this issue), al Anbar is largely out of U.S. and Iraqi government control. Pressed about the need to work on that province while improving the situation in Baghdad, Abizaid declared that Baghdad was the main effort and Anbar would have to wait. So for at least the next six months, while we and the Iraqis focus on Baghdad, the insurgency in Anbar province will continue to thrive.

The continuation of the insurgency in Anbar is more important than Abizaid is making out. It may be a secondary effort for us, but the uncontrolled Sunni Arab insurgency is the most important factor preventing Maliki from disarming Shiite militias. We are caught in a vicious circle. Because we have not effectively suppressed the Sunni Arab insurgency, the Shiite communities in Iraq demand protection. We refuse to provide it to them, so they turn to militias. Those militias, in turn, victimize the Sunni Arab population. That victimization fuels the insurgency. It is a straightforward cycle that seems to be escaping our military leaders. Demanding that Maliki break it by disarming the militias is folly—as long as the Sunni Arab insurgency continues to burn, no Iraqi political leader will be able to convince the Shiite community to abandon the forces it sees as essential for its self-defense. And as long as the Shiite militias continue to victimize Sunni Arabs, it will be incredibly difficult to bring the Sunni Arab insurgent leaders to the negotiating table, even if they could bring their followers with them. The U.S. military is the only force in Iraq capable of breaking this cycle by bringing security to the country, and Abizaid and his senior commanders in Iraq continue to reject that solution.

The question of troop levels in Iraq is fundamental. With the forces currently deployed, according to Abizaid's own testimony, the United States is unable to accomplish the following tasks all at once: Train Iraqi troops as quickly as necessary, support them in their efforts to clear and hold Baghdad, and reduce the violence in Anbar. Indeed, Lieutenant General Michael D. Maples, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, also testified last week. He stated that, despite all of our joint efforts, the Sunni Arab insurgency has actually gained strength and capacity. Operation Together Forward II, he declared, has achieved "limited success." Sectarian violence decreased in August, when the operation began, but "as armed groups adapted to the Coalition presence, and the I[raqi] S[ecurity] F[orces] was unable to exert authority once Coalition forces moved on, attacks returned to and even surpassed preoperational levels." In other words, the operation has failed so far because there are not enough U.S. forces to support Iraqi efforts to hold the cleared neighborhoods.

How can one say that there are enough troops in Iraq now in these circumstances? The only way to make that argument is to assume that we have time to take things slowly—time to train Iraqis, time to let them make the inevitable mistakes and suffer the inevitable losses and defeats, time in which we can allow the insurgency to spin out of control and the violence to escalate. We do not have such time. The sectarian violence is rising, the insurgency is strengthening, and the control of the Iraqi government over its people and state is slipping. And America's will to continue the fight is breaking.

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In fact, most serious people now concede we need more troops. The backup argument for not sending more troops is that we don't have them to send. Abizaid alluded to such concerns. It is true we should have expanded the military long ago. It is true that it is urgent that we do so now. And it is true that surging 50,000 more troops—with the equipment they need—into Iraq in the coming weeks and months will strain a strained military further. But it is also true that we can do it—if we think success in Iraq is a national priority—by extending tours, moving troops from other theaters into Iraq, and calling up expanded numbers from the Guard and Reserves.

None of this will be easy to do. Nevertheless, if more troops are needed for success in Iraq, we must bear the strain now—while making up for lost time in expanding the military. There is every indication that the men and women of the U.S. military are willing to tackle this extra burden—if they believe we have a strategy to win, and that help is (finally) on the way. Incoming defense secretary Robert Gates should have no higher priority than providing this help—in addition to directing his commanders not to let self-imposed constraints prevent us from winning the war in Iraq. Win the war and expand the military, both as soon as possible—that's Gates's task. Meanwhile, the military commanders need to think and speak in an unconstrained way to our political leaders about what has to be done now.

We cannot, in the end, control how quickly Iraqi forces become ready to fight. We cannot control whether or not Maliki makes the necessary political and military decisions. What we can control is security. When U.S. forces in adequate numbers, together with Iraqi troops, cleared Tal Afar, Mosul, Falluja, Sadr City, and Najaf in 2004 and 2005, levels of violence in those areas dropped enormously. Economic activity picked up. Political leaders, rather than militia commanders, took charge. We know what success looks like, and we know what it demands—more U.S. troops, operating together with such Iraqi forces as are available, to establish security above all else. And we know what failure looks like—waiting for the Iraqis to take the lead they are not capable of taking and allowing the violence to continue in the meantime. Abizaid and Casey have good reason to be proud of the improvement in the situation they have overseen, but better reason to be fearful that it will not last if they do not change course dramatically. We must change our strategy to reflect the new reality, and we must send the military resources needed to pursue that strategy. If we do not, it is likely that we will fail in Iraq.

—Frederick W. Kagan and William Kristol

Michael Ramirez

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Son Knows Best

Why Bush chose Robert Gates.

BY FRED BARNES

RARELY HAS THE PRESS gotten a story so wrong. Robert Gates, President Bush's choice to replace Defense Secretary Don Rumsfeld, is *not* the point man for a boarding party of former national security officials from the elder President Bush's administration taking over defense and foreign policy in his son's administration. The media buzz about the realists of Bush 41, so cautious and practical, supplanting the idealists of Bush 43, whose grandiose, neoconservative thinking got us stuck in Iraq, is wrong.

President Bush—the current one—decided to hire Gates two days before the November 7 election. He didn't consult his father. He didn't talk to James Baker, his father's secretary of state and now co-head of the Iraq Study Group, whose official advice on Iraq is expected in December. Nor did he tell Rumsfeld that he was lining up someone to take his job.

Before hiring him, Bush had to make sure Gates didn't think America's intervention in Iraq was a mistake and wasn't deeply skeptical of Bush's decision to make democracy promotion a fundamental theme of American foreign policy. With Gates, it came down to this: "The fundamental question was, was he Brent Scowcroft or not?" a Bush aide says.

In Bush 41, Scowcroft was the national security adviser, Gates his deputy. Scowcroft, a realist, is a sharp critic of both Bush's Iraq strategy and the democratic thrust of his entire foreign policy. And Scowcroft has gone public with his strong opposition in articles and interviews.

Gates was initially approached about the defense post in October by Stephen Hadley, Bush's national security adviser. The outreach was "delicate," a Bush aide says, and kept secret. Gates had at least one supporter inside Bush's circle, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. She, too, had worked for Scowcroft in the senior Bush's administration. She told the president that whenever she had sought to wean Scowcroft from a narrow realist position—such as his dismissal of Russian democratic leader Boris Yeltsin as a rube and his unyielding support for Mikhail Gorbachev—she turned to Gates for help.

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Bush was first given a thick briefing book of articles by or about Gates, who was not an unknown quantity to him. Gates is president of Texas A&M University, the home of the elder Bush's presidential library. He and the senior Bush attended an A&M football game together several weeks ago, a fact that helped fuel the Bush 41 takeover theory.

In 2005, Gates, who was CIA chief from 1991 to 1993, was offered the newly created position as director of national intelligence. He declined, expressing doubt about the usefulness of the post and citing projects at Texas A&M that he needed to complete. Those, he told Bush officials, would take 6 to 9 months.

Despite his father's close relationship with Gates—plus the senior Bush's dislike of Rumsfeld—Bush never had a substantive discussion with him about the possibility of installing Gates or anyone else in the Pentagon job. The elder Bush wasn't informed of the Gates nomination until the morning of its announcement, November 8. The president personally called his father with the news.

The first thing Bush officials needed to find out from Gates was whether he had finished his college projects. He had. Then they questioned him about his views on national security. They were satisfied, but the president wanted to find out for himself.

Two days before the election, the president summoned Gates to his ranch near Waco, Texas. It was the first time they'd talked about the Pentagon position. Bush had houseguests for the weekend to celebrate his wife's sixtieth birthday and their twenty-ninth anniversary. He left the guests to spend nearly two hours questioning Gates in his private office at the ranch. It was only the two of them. No aides participated in the meeting.

The president wanted "clarity" on Gates's views, especially on Iraq and the pursuit of democracy. He asked if Gates shared the goal of victory in Iraq and would be determined to pursue it aggressively as defense chief. He asked if Gates agreed democracy should be the aim of American foreign policy and not merely the stability of pro-American regimes, notably in the Middle East. Bush also wanted to know Gates's "philosophy" of America's role in the world, an aide says, and his take on the pitfalls America faces. "The president got good vibes," according to the Bush official.

Bush didn't offer Gates the job immediately. But he'd already learned from his aides that Gates would take the post if it were offered. Bush called Gates some time after their meeting to offer him the job.

Pulling off the Gates nomination without Rumsfeld's knowledge was tricky. White House officials say the idea of replacing Rumsfeld grew, at least partly, out of the secretary's sug-

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gestion to the president on several occasions over the past year that "fresh eyes" might be needed in his job.

But Bush and Rumsfeld agreed a change at defense couldn't occur until an appropriate replacement was found. And for months no one was under consideration. Several names were mentioned in the media, including Democratic Senator Joe Lieberman and James Baker. But press speculation about them wasn't taken seriously at the White House.

Besides, the president gave every indication he intended to keep Rumsfeld. At a meeting with reporters in September, Bush said he backed Rumsfeld "100 percent," liked the fact that Rumsfeld and not the military brass ran the Pentagon, and enthusiastically endorsed Rumsfeld's reform of the military into a smaller, more mobile force.

It was only a few weeks after that Q-and-A session that Gates was initially contacted about succeeding Rumsfeld. Bush aides informed Rumsfeld of the Gates selection shortly before he was to confer with the president at the White House on Election Day.

The timing of Rumsfeld's departure has prompted complaints by congressional Republicans, who have argued that the GOP would have lost fewer seats had the defense secretary's resignation taken place a few months before the election.

Bush and his aides disagree. If Rumsfeld had been fired in the summer or early fall, that would have been seen as a purely political step designed to affect the outcome of the election. And Senate confirmation of a successor would have faced fierce opposition. If it had occurred a few weeks after the election, Bush officials insist, it would have been seen as an act of weakness following a Democratic triumph. Instead, it was carried out early on Election Day and announced the next morning.

In any case, the switch from Rumsfeld to Gates (assuming he's confirmed) doesn't represent a policy reversal. Nonetheless, the Washington community, led by the foreign policy establishment and the media, are desperate to believe it does. ♦

Pelosi's Murthaless Week

House Democrats choose their leaders.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

When they met last week to elect their new leadership, House Democrats saved the most contentious decision for last. The caucus quickly named Nancy Pelosi of California speaker-designate before electing Jim Clyburn of South Carolina majority whip and Rahm Emanuel of Illinois caucus chairman. All three decisions were unanimous. Then it was time to elect the next majority leader, and the caucus came unglued.

In one corner was Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the current minority whip and the favorite in the race. In the other corner was Jack Murtha of Pennsylvania, the most vocal advocate of "redeployment" from Iraq and the face of the antiwar Democrats. Prior to the vote, supporters of each candidate addressed the crowd. According to some of those present, the atmosphere was civil but intense, and the meeting room was filled with anticipation. Hoyer's advocates, including Henry Waxman of California, incoming chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, emphasized the minority whip's interpersonal skills; Murtha's advocates, including speaker-designate Pelosi, emphasized the war in Iraq and the need to present a unified policy of withdrawal. After the speeches, members voted by secret ballot. Hoyer won, 149 to 86. It wasn't even close.

It was a setback for which Pelosi had only herself to blame. While her sympathies with Murtha were no secret, days before the leadership election Pelosi made the controversial decision to circulate a letter of support for him and campaign on his behalf. (Just how vigorously Pelosi campaigned for Murtha is unclear.) Pelosi will probably recover quickly from this setback, but the vote also exposed divisions between the speaker-designate and caucus that are unlikely to vanish anytime soon. It exposed the left's belief that leaving Iraq is *the* litmus-test issue. And, perhaps more important, it revealed that the antiwar, pro-redeployment Pelosi may be out of step with a Democratic majority not yet sold on abandoning Iraq.

Pelosi clearly believes the midterm elections weren't simply a repudiation of Bush's current policies in Iraq, but rather a call to end the war as soon as possible. In public remarks following the leadership elections, she said Murtha's announcement last November that America should leave Iraq "changed the debate" in Washington and around the country "in a way that I think gave us this majority." She told the press she supported Murtha because she "thought that would be the best way to bring an end to the war in Iraq." The clear implication was that a vote for Murtha was a vote for rapid "redeployment." On this, the Democrats with whom I spoke last week all agreed: Murtha's was a one-issue candidacy.

There wasn't much else on which he could run. Pro-life and pro-gun, Murtha is to the right of most of his caucus on social issues and a legendary federal appropriator who never met an earmark he didn't like. He remains an unindicted co-conspira-

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tor in the 1980 ABSCAM bribery scandal and an outspoken critic of lobbying reform. Last week, a few days before the leadership election, a FBI videotape on which Murtha can be seen discussing potential business deals with an undercover federal agent was widely circulated on the Internet. More recently, reporters and nonprofit "good government" organizations have raised questions about the activities of Murtha's brother, a lobbyist whose clients have received millions of dollars in congressional appropriations.

Hoyer has his own ties to K Street lobbying firms, but is nowhere near as compromised as Murtha on ethics issues. Hoyer is a classic political operator who, through fundraising and interpersonal connections, has built strong constituencies among his colleagues. In the 2006 election cycle alone Hoyer raised more than $8 million for House Democrats while campaigning in 80 congressional districts in 33 states. He knows the name of every Democratic member and is always willing to meet and forge alliances. "He is a member's leader," Rep. Maxine Waters told MSNBC's Chris Matthews last week.

"Every one of us has a story about Steny," Rep. Dan Boren of Oklahoma told me. "He would always go out of his way to make you feel at home, whether you were progressive or conservative." On his website, in the run-up to the leadership election, Hoyer posted letters of support from House moderates, a majority of the incoming Democratic freshmen, and nine incoming committee chairmen. He even posted a letter of support from six "progressive members" of the caucus.

It was not the most stirring endorsement from the left, and indeed the race for majority leader broke along ideological lines, on foreign policy in particular. Both Murtha and Hoyer voted to authorize the use of force against Saddam Hussein. But Murtha has since repudiated that vote and said the war is lost, while Hoyer has not. Last fall, when Murtha announced it was time for the United States to leave Iraq, Hoyer was his most prominent Democratic critic. Also last year, Hoyer formed a "kitchen cabinet" of moderate Democrats to articulate a Democratic national strategy that would appeal to diverse groups of Americans.

One of the members of Hoyer's cabinet was Jane Harman of California, the ranking member on the House Intelligence Committee. Pelosi is expected to pass over Harman for committee chair in the next Congress in favor of Alcee Hastings of Florida, the disgraced judge who was impeached by Congress for his role in a bribery scandal but then won election to the House of Representatives. Hastings is viewed as more partisan than Harman and more likely to ask tough questions of administration officials. If Pelosi behaves as expected, it will be the second time the speaker-designate has sided with an ethically challenged individual because of his antagonistic stance toward Bush and his foreign policy.

Steny Hoyer has his own ties to K Street lobbying firms, but is nowhere near as compromised as John Murtha on ethics issues. Hoyer is a classic political operator.

But events may defy expectations. As in the leadership election, when her handpicked majority leader lost by a significant margin, Pelosi may face a revolt and be unable to appoint Hastings. The House Democratic caucus's position on Iraq is still fluid. Says one former Democratic Hill aide, "In the House, it would be nice to say we have consensus around the Murtha approach, but you don't, you probably don't." One Democrat told me Hoyer's victory was "an important statement by the caucus that they're not going to be driven by the antiwar left."

Instead, on foreign policy, a new base of power in the caucus has emerged in the center. If Pelosi intends to make Iraq the focus of the next Congress, as would seem to be the case, she will have to find ways to harness the support of more centrist members. There will be 44 Blue Dog Democrats in the next Congress, the most since the coalition of moderates was founded in 1995. There will be 60 Democratic representatives from districts Bush won in 2004. And there will be 29 Democratic freshmen, each with his or her own position on Iraq. These range from Dave Loebsack of Iowa, who advocates "complete disengagement" within the year, to Heath Shuler of North Carolina, who on his website pointedly disagrees with Murtha and is one of only two freshman Democrats to use the word "win" with regard to Iraq (the other is Tim Mahoney of Florida). Most of the freshmen are somewhere between these extremes—which means that, in any future fight, their votes will be up for grabs.

Murtha's overwhelming defeat may be a sign that the unified Democratic caucus on which Pelosi built her reputation could quickly become a thing of the past. The speaker-designate won the respect of many of her colleagues during the fight over Bush's Medicare prescription drug entitlement, when her ability to round up Democratic votes almost derailed passage of the legislation, and during the fight over Bush's proposal to reform Social Security, when she successfully prevented all House Democrats but one from working with Republicans. A major worry for Pelosi and her supporters is that those strengths may vanish once the Democrats are in the majority. "People saw that the Pelosi-Hoyer leadership team had been effective," says Rep. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, who supported Hoyer. "There was no good reason to jettison one member of the team. It's a team that unifies." Which is true—for now. ♦

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Bartering with Nothing

Why a regional conference won't solve our Iraq problem. BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

COULD A REGIONAL conference, drawing in all of Iraq's neighbors, help save us and the Iraqis from a massive civil war in Mesopotamia? It is difficult to think what the United States might offer at the negotiating table that would cause Iraq's neighbors to stop seeing it in their interest to foment trouble there. Nevertheless, the idea of a regional conference has gained currency in Washington, notably inside the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group.

The advocates, like former ambassador and ISG adviser James Dobbins of the Rand Institute, argue that even if such a conference failed to make any difference, it couldn't make the Iraq imbroglio any worse. For other participants, the desirability of regional talk is an article of faith. Former U.S. ambassador to Syria Edward Djerejian, who runs the Baker Institute in Houston and will likely be the primary drafter of the ISG's report, has long advocated closer contact between Washington and Damascus. Secretary of Defense designate Robert Gates in 2004 co-chaired a Council on Foreign Relations study of Iran with President Carter's national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, which concluded that a sustained conversation with the mullahs was long overdue. And former secretary of state James Baker and former congressman Lee Hamilton have at times expressed similar views. With the ISG report imminent, it is worth asking, Are discussions with Iraq's neighbors a good idea? Could a regional conference possibly help? Would we be worse off for trying?

Let us set aside for the moment the virulently anti-American Islamist ideology of Iran's ruling clergy and their praetorians, starting with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Let us also not inquire how much influence Iran's mullahs actually have over the Shia of Iraq, among whom a common slur is to suggest that someone has Persian blood or is an Iranian "fifth columnist." Let us put aside whether the Iraqis themselves would favor inviting foreigners to intrude further into their affairs; and, for those who care deeply about Sunni Arab participation in a new Iraq, whether legitimizing an Iranian role could possibly win Sunni friends.

Let us also not ask how much pull Saudi Arabia and Jordan have with the Sunni rejectionist camp of Baathists, Sunni supremacists, Salafi and Wahhabi fundamentalists, and martyrdom-loving foreign holy warriors. None of these takes his orders from the royal families of Jordan and Arabia. A majority of the foreign jihadists in Iraq appear to be Saudis, which makes perfect sense given the official anti-Shiite Wahhabi ideology in Saudi Arabia. If Riyadh were upset by Sunnis' killing Shiites in Iraq, and thereby provoking sectarian strife, it could have done a lot to dissuade would-be holy warriors from volunteering.

Instead, let us consider the question at the heart of any negotiation: What can be traded and bargained? What in the world can the United States give the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Alawite mafia of Bashar Assad in Damascus that they do not have already? Or to put it in the vernacular of the region: Can the Americans actually hurt me, and will they refrain from doing so? What have Damascus and Tehran lost by the turmoil in Iraq? If the violence in Iraq diminished, would they lose or gain?

For realists, the answers to all of these questions aren't good. When you're weak—when you're seen to be weak and see yourself as weak—you don't have much to offer.

Let's take Iran first, the most important player in the region. Beyond seeing Saddam go down, the most significant gain for the ruling clergy has been the radicalization of the Iraqi Shiite community. The greatest mid- to long-term threat in post-Saddam Iraq to Iran's ruling mullahs had been the possible triumph of the moderate Shia, led by the Iranian-born Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who carries on a political tradition that Iran's leading cleric, Ali Khamenei, detests. Clerics always think about other clerics; Iran's political priesthood has always worried first about clerical dissent and religious threats to its power. Iraq's turmoil has been very good for Khamenei and Iraq's politicized young clergy, who want to upset the traditional, moderate clergy in the Iraqi holy city of Najaf. The chaos in Iraq—the sectarian strife—has nearly neutered Sistani, who tried mightily to prevent the unleashing of Shiite revenge against the Sunni insurgency's attacks on his flock.

Emphasize "nearly." If you were the Iranian mullahs, you'd want this radicalization of the Iraqi Shia to keep going. The Iraqi Shiite community is still far from replicating the Iranian revolutionary pattern, where the Revolutionary Guards gradually replaced local militias, establishing themselves as the guarantor of the revolution's success. There are many things about Iraq that are different from revolutionary Iran, that Tehran's mullahs know are unchangeably different, but the one thing that the clerical regime surely sees as indispensable is the need to keep Iraq unsettled. With violence, Sistani and the moderate clergy will continue to collapse and the Americans will bleed.

Tied down and fearful in Iraq, the Iranians now gleefully note, the

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Americans will continue to lose spirit and be unable to challenge the mullahs' nuclear-weapons program and their designs in the Middle East. The Sunni-Shiite collision in Iraq doesn't fit with Tehran's ecumenical drive to become the leader of the militant Muslim world. The regime, rhetorically led by the lay but ideologically die-hard Ahmadinejad, will compensate by continuing to ratchet up its anti-American and anti-Zionist message. But Iran's ruling mullahs will not compromise the radicalization of the Shia in Iraq—a huge success for them, far greater in its potential consequences than the radicalization of the Lebanese Shia under Hezbollah—for the sake of reaching out to the Arab world's Sunni militants outraged by Iraqi Shiite attacks against Iraqi Sunnis. Since 1979, Arab Sunnis have regularly disappointed Iran's Islamists. Tehran will play for the far greater gain of destroying and then rebuilding Iraq's Shiite clergy. Although American realists cherish the belief that states hate a vacuum and disorder, stability in Iraq is the last thing Tehran wants to see now.

Let's note a historical contrast. Realists like to cite the international conference on post-Taliban Afghanistan as an instance of a positive Iranian role in the region. However, Iranians were not "cooperating" because they wanted to be helpful. In 2003, the clerical regime's fear of the United States was palpable. Iranians had watched the United States wipe out the Taliban to the east and Saddam to the west. Tehran was focused on the superpower on its doorstep and an American president who'd demonstrated, unlike his predecessors, that he would invade Middle Eastern countries that posed a threat to the United States.

They were also "helpful" because, truth be told, the Iranians really don't care strategically about their eastern neighbor. Iran's Islamic revolution has been overwhelmingly aimed westward toward the Arabs and the United States. Afghanistan has been for the clerical regime, as it was for the Shah, a backwater. What the Iranians have wanted most from post-Taliban Afghanistan is the exit from Iran of Sunni Afghan refugees, whom Iranians see as disreputable elements engaged in crime and the seduction of poor Shiite Persian women. Many realists like to use Iran's relatively benign behavior in Afghanistan as proof of Tehran's good intentions and what might be possible in Iraq. They shouldn't. For Tehran's ruling clergy, the radicalization of Iraq's Shia is worth fighting for.

So what does the United States have to offer the Iranian clergy that might tempt them to compromise their interests in Iraq? Well, there's the bomb. However, this, too, makes no sense. There is zero chance the president would allow these negotiations. Besides, an American promise not to interfere in Tehran's nuclear-weapons program would mean nothing since the mullahs now think they've already won, in great part because they believe—and the U.S. media, prominent realists, and much of the Democratic party reinforce the view—that America is too enfeebled by Iraq, too fearful of possible Iranian retaliation inside the country, for the Bush administration seriously to challenge Iran's nuclear aspirations.

With the exception of its own survival, there is nothing the clerical regime cares more about than the bomb. If the United States wanted to persuade the mullahs to stop supplying money and weaponry to radical groups in Iraq, then a true realpolitician would threaten the regime's most cherished plans—its nuclear program. Yet in the Gates-Brzezinski colloquy on Iran, Gates conceded a nuclear weapon to the clergy. This is an odd position to take before even trying to enter into "negotiations."

With the Syrians, the situation is the same. They gain by the turmoil in Iraq. And they have not been punished for giving aid to the Iraqi insurgency. Syria is right now regaining ground in Lebanon, the most important foreign-policy objective of the Assad regime, against America's wishes and the Bush administration's determined diplomacy. Undoubtedly the Assad regime believes that America's enfeeblement in Iraq has helped Syria's cause in Lebanon. The last real gasp of serious American diplomacy on Lebanon occurred in 2005 before Bashar Assad realized there was no substance to America's soft-power approach to pressuring Damascus (U.N. resolutions don't intimidate Middle Eastern dictators). More important, this diplomatic push occurred before the Bush administration realized that its counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq was failing. We are now much weaker than we were in 2005.

Doubtless the heretical Shiite-Alawite regime in Damascus, with its minority power base, would prefer not to see a Sunni-Shiite blood bath in Iraq. But the key for Alawite survival is the Iranian connection, not fraternity with Sunnis upset by Iraq, and especially not with anti-Shiite Sunni fundamentalists, whom the regime has at times energetically slaughtered. So what's left? Washington could bless the Syrian reoccupation of Lebanon, although it is difficult to believe that the president would do this. Besides, given the perception of American weakness in the region, even such a concession, so humiliating to us, would likely be of little barter value.

To negotiate successfully in the Middle East, you have to convince the denizens that you have and are willing to use power. To enter into a conference—assuming the Syrians and the Iranians would deign to participate—from a position of weakness is to guarantee that you exit weaker than when you went in. And the last thing the Bush administration needs now is to appear any more feeble. If for some reason the president feels compelled to try to convene such a conference or bilateral talks with Syria or Iran on Iraq, he would do America's diplomats a big favor by announcing first that 50,000 new troops are on their way to Mesopotamia and that we intend to slug this out until we win. Covertly but noticeably, the United States should also start high-altitude observation flights over Iran's nuclear facilities. More naval activity in the Persian Gulf would help, too. If the Syrians and the Iranians were entering negotiations with us, that's what they'd do. ♦

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Another Newsroom Martyr

Don't cry for the *Los Angeles Times*.

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

APART FROM THE DEATH of a journalist, the saddest story for anyone in the news business—and the one most likely to waste expensive newsprint—is the martyrdom of an editor at the hands of his proprietor. There have been quite a few lately, and with the crisis of the newspaper business, there will be more.

The most recent episode involves Dean Baquet, editor of the *Los Angeles Times* for the past year. Since 2000, the *Times* has been owned by the Tribune Company of Chicago; and while that merger/acquisition was widely hailed at the time, it came at the height of the dot-com bubble and has suffered from the subsequent travails of American newspapers. Both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times* have lost circulation and advertising revenue, and the Tribune Company stock price has been anemic. Now, shareholders are demanding the sale of the company, in whole or in part; and it is probable that, by the end of the year, the *Tribune*, the *Times*, and other properties—including several newspapers and television stations—will have new owners.

Whether this is a Good or Bad Thing depends on your point of view. In retrospect, it is apparent that the corporate cultures of the two empires were ill-suited to one another, and that Chicago and L.A. were bound to collide. But the version of the story presented in the media—idealistic *Times* editorial staff struggling to maintain quality in defiance of philistine bean counters at the Tribune Company—is standard, and deeply misleading, press mythology.

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Dean Baquet lost his job this month because he and his publisher, who was also fired, publicly defied the instructions of the Tribune Company chairman, Dennis FitzSimons, to trim costs by cutting staff. Whether FitzSimons is a corporate visionary or a dumb businessman we may never know; but his presumption that the *Times* editorial staff is bloated and chronically oblivious to the needs of its customers is a reasonable presumption, and has been for years. This does not, of course, apply to every *Times* staffer—there are plenty of excellent writers and editors—but it is a fair generalization.

I was a member of the *Times* editorial staff in the 1980s, and still recall with wonder my first day on the job, when then-publisher Tom Johnson announced a six-month moratorium on first-class—I repeat, first-class—air travel for reporters. The level of anger and indignation in the newsroom could not have been deeper had he instituted a drastic pay cut. The *Times* newsroom was a quiet, comfortable sinecure—the Velvet Coffin, in local parlance—for correspondents at work on long-term "projects" and writers who produced annual, or semi-annual, stories. The *Los Angeles Times*, I was told, was a writer's newspaper—the very antithesis, logic would suggest, of a reader's newspaper.

While the *Times* built its reputation on long, self-indulgent, prize-minded series and "stories behind the news," the *Tribune* prospered by emphasizing comprehensive local coverage. In effect, the Tribune Company has sought to instill some consumer-minded habits at the *Times*, which could never successfully penetrate the San Fernando Valley or neighboring Orange County. This was a frustration to *Times* management, but hardly a mystery. As with most giant metropolitan newspapers, the *Times* regarded the suburbs of Los Angeles as benighted appendages to the city—roughly the equivalent of flyover country—and its condescension, not to say contempt, did not go unnoticed.

Then there is ideology. The reflexive leftism of the *Los Angeles Times* is typical of American newspapers, and Southern California is politically Democratic. But the fact that 56 percent of potential subscribers are liberals (for want of a better term) means that 44 percent are not—and in a metropolitan area of 13 million people, that's a lot of potential subscribers to exasperate and drive into the welcoming arms of Fox News, Rush Limbaugh, and the blogs.

A half-century after the death of afternoon newspapers, and one decade into the Internet, we may locate the future of daily print journalism roughly halfway between the *Times* and the *Tribune*: leaner products, appealing to older, more affluent readers, emphasizing local news but with quality national and foreign coverage, and culture and features, to prevent a wholesale exodus to the Internet.

The problem is that the newspaper business—and "business" here is emphasized—is largely in the thrall of editorial departments: Publishers dare not contradict the wisdom of editors, and newsrooms should never be polluted by the presence of advertising or marketing staffers. Attend the annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (I am a former member) and there are two persistent, equally suicidal, themes: how to compete with television and the Internet, and how to promote racial quotas in the newsroom.

The first, of course, is impossible, and the second is irrelevant. But as circulation plummets and advertisers flee, the front pages of America's dailies are modeled on the chaos of *USA Today*; and those readers who might actually purchase a newspaper—perhaps even subscribe to one—are routinely derided, upbraided, and ignored.

So while it may be poignant to read

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about the editor of the *Times* standing up to those profit-minded meanies in Chicago, the Tribune Company is on to something. If the long-term survival of newspapers is at stake, it will not be secured by fat and happy newsrooms, or writers and editors incessantly addressing themselves to other writers and editors.

As for Dean Baquet, not to worry: Defenestration at the hands of Dennis FitzSimons is a shrewd career move. I suspect he has been deluged with offers to edit elsewhere. Or, if he prefers, there are dozens of agreeable institutions—the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, the Poynter Institute for journalists in sunny Florida, the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government—where the Al Hunts, Geneva Overholsers, and Ted Koppels of the world meet to discuss the future of the press, and sip Kool-Aid. ♦

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Republican Border Wars

A House caucus divided against itself.

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

By appointing Florida senator Mel Martinez to chair the Republican National Committee, President Bush sent a blunt message to conservatives: "Drop dead." That's the opinion of Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, who has lobbied hard against Bush's "comprehensive" immigration reform package. Hyperbole, perhaps, but it highlights the GOP fissure on immigration—one deepened by the recent election.

Martinez, a Cuban refugee who fled the island in 1962, supports the Bush vision of a guest-worker program for future immigrants and a "path to citizenship" for illegal aliens. He is also a prominent GOP envoy to the Latino community. His elevation to RNC chief, says Krikorian, shows how "emotionally" invested Bush is in passing an "amnesty" bill. "This is something the president can't let go."

Bush, of course, rejects the word "amnesty." But his decision to tap Martinez for the RNC post may reflect unease over the GOP's loss of Hispanic votes in 2006. Like Bush, Martinez breaks with most conservatives on immigration: He accepts the need for stiffened border control, but also wants to expand channels for legal immigration and create a process for illegals to earn citizenship. The Hagel-Martinez bill, which Bush strongly favored, did just that. It passed the GOP-led Senate by a vote of 62-36 last May, before dying at the hands of House Republicans, who refused even to appoint conferees.

In the meantime, Congress passed, and Bush signed, a bill calling for 700 miles of reinforced fencing along the U.S.-Mexican border. But the guest-worker and earned-citizenship ideas languished—until the election was over. At his press conference the next day, Bush agreed that a Democratic Congress would give him (in a reporter's words) "a better shot at comprehensive immigration reform." It is an issue, Bush said, "where I believe we can find some common ground."

Maybe. But almost as soon as this became the new conventional wisdom, it was supplanted by the even newer conventional wisdom, according to which House Democrats may resist pushing any umbrella bill that House Republicans can deride as "amnesty." There are several reasons for this. Democrats may wish to deny Bush the pomp of a signing ceremony, not to mention any credit with Latinos. Democrats may also be leery of forcing such a tough vote on their freshmen, several of whom ran to Bush's right on immigration. No doubt House Republicans will be trying to peel off Blue Dog Democrats with whom they can create an "anti-amnesty" bloc.

Krikorian guesses that "the overwhelming majority" of House Republicans oppose the Bush plan, which means they would oppose a revived Hagel-Martinez bill. "There's a small hard core that would pretty much vote for any amnesty that was presented to them." If Krikorian is right, it suggests an irony liberals should appreciate: The same presi-

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dent that many caricature as a right-wing partisan is closer on immigration to Ted Kennedy than he is to the House GOP caucus.

But not all conservatives agree about the House Republicans. Americans for Tax Reform president Grover Norquist thinks there has *always* been a functioning House majority for comprehensive immigration reform. So what happened last summer? "The radio talk-show hosts got out there and poisoned the atmosphere," says Norquist, who worries that being overly harsh on immigration contributed to the GOP's loss of Congress.

That seems a common point of view among Republicans who favor the Bush-Martinez approach. "Immigration hurt us," says one GOP House aide. "That's why Mel Martinez got the RNC chair." While many question whether speaker-designate Nancy Pelosi will make it a priority, this aide says he "would not be surprised" if the Democratic Congress passed comprehensive immigration reform "within the first hundred days."

What if Pelosi *does* make common cause with Bush on immigration? How will House Republicans respond? "I think they'll lay down on the railroad tracks in front of it, to keep it from going through," says an aide to GOP congressman Mike Pence of Indiana, head of the conservative Republican Study Committee. "We lost the base a long time ago, and that's why the House crumbled."

Last Friday Pence lost his bid for minority leader to John Boehner, the current majority leader. Arizona's John Shadegg also lost his challenge to incumbent Roy Blunt of Missouri for GOP whip. Both vote counts were lopsided. "I have never been so disgusted with my own party," says another Republican House aide. "I find it astonishing that our leadership just seems to be skating through."

Whatever their thoughts on the leadership fight, Republicans remain bitterly split on immigration. What if Bush puts on a full-court press for his guest-worker and earned-citizenship proposals? "I think it will be chaos," says the "disgusted" GOP aide. "It's gonna tear our party up." It would certainly place a further burden on Bush's already strained relations with congressional Republicans.

Much may depend on the lessons Republicans take from the 2006 election. Fans of the Bush-Martinez strategy point to losing Republicans J.D. Hayworth, Randy Graf, and John Hostettler. Here were three of the toughest border hawks of the campaign. Hayworth and Graf were running in Arizona, one of the states most affected by illegal border crossings. Yet they both lost, as did Hostettler in Indiana. Meanwhile, a national exit poll found that voters—when given two options for dealing with illegal immigrants—preferred giving them "a chance to apply for legal status" over mass deportation by a margin of 57 percent to 38 percent. All these data, say the Bush-Martinez Republicans, suggest public support for the sort of "comprehensive" reform that passed the Senate.

Other Republicans, not surprisingly, draw a different lesson. They claim the exit poll question ("*Should most illegal immigrants working in the United States be: Offered a chance to apply for legal status; Deported to the country they came from?*") was hopelessly skewed in favor of the "amnesty" side. They note that Hostettler's opponent, Democrat Brad Ellsworth, was also a security-first, anti-amnesty border hawk. And while Arizona voters rejected Hayworth and Graf, they overwhelmingly approved a series of ballot initiatives that will, among other things, restrict illegal immigrants' access to social services, ban them from winning punitive damages in civil lawsuits, and make English the official state language.

Come January, much will depend on the agenda set by Pelosi. Rather than toss up the Hail Mary of comprehensive reform with a guest-worker program and earned citizenship for illegals, Pelosi may pursue a piecemeal strategy. That is, she may bring up smaller, labor-related bills that touch on various aspects of immigration policy but would not prove as controversial as broad-based reform.

It's also worth noting what Democrat Steny Hoyer, the House majority leader-elect, said shortly after the election. He had just met with Bush at the White House and discussed immigration. "The president's observation was—and our observation was—that we are probably going to have an easier time with the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives than he had with the Republican majority," Hoyer told Bloomberg Television. "Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill got together—I mentioned that at the White House—and they solved the Social Security funding crisis of 1983. Each gave a little bit, and they said to the American public, 'This is what we need to do.' We can do that again." It may be a long two years for House Republicans. ♦

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Decline and Fall

How not to act like a great power.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

AMERICA IS FINISHED as a great power. Not because it no longer possesses the resources, but because it has lost the will. That was brought home to me on both ends of a recent trip through London's Heathrow airport en route to Phoenix.

• **No great power permits its citizens to be discriminated against.** Yet just keep your eyes open as you go through security at Heathrow (or any other international airport). Off goes your jacket. Off comes your wife's jacket, like yours, to be deposited in a heap in a plastic bin headed through a machine designed to detect something or other. Next comes a Middle Eastern woman, clad head to toe in a black garment, loose-fitting enough to conceal a weapon of mass destruction. No one dares impede her progress through the detectors.

America makes no move to tell the world's authorities that its citizens are not terrorists, and that any sensible program based on statistical probability—some call it profiling—would reverse security priorities. Jimmy Carter proved that any third-rate power can lay hands on American citizens without consequences. The world got the clue, and now treats us accordingly.

• **No great power would allow itself to be held hostage to desert kingdoms run by medieval theocracies.** Yet America does. We land in Phoenix and hop into a car that can be brought to a screeching halt if our supplies of oil are cut off. So we are afraid to tell our Saudi suppliers to stop financing terrorists, and to stop polluting the minds of their young with anti-Semitic, anti-Western rants. We allow Russia, a country with a GDP less than that of Italy but with lots of oil, to tell us to take a hike when we protest its increasing tendency to return to the good old days of a KGB-dominated society. After all, if we support democratic forces in Russia, Putin might divert his oil and gas to China instead of giving us the privilege of buying it at inflated prices.

We unleash our secretary of energy to beg the OPEC nations to please let the price of oil drop from an outrageous $70 per barrel to a merely extortionate $60, but most important, please don't cut us off. And, by the way, we will send our fleet to protect you should terrorists threaten your oil facility.

Instead of doing what a great nation would do—take steps to stem the flow of our dollars to what Reuel Marc Gerecht aptly described in these pages as "the Saudi Wahhabi multitentacled missionary-money machine, still the most influential conveyer of anti-American, anti-Western, anti-Semitic, and anti-Christian hatred in the world"—we unleash our secretary of energy to beg the OPEC nations to please let the price of oil drop from an outrageous $70 per barrel to a merely extortionate $60, but most important, please don't cut us off. And, by the way, you have us so much under your thumb that we will send our fleet to protect you should terrorists threaten your oil facility at Ras Tanura. But if our sailors pull a Bible in their duffles, look out. Groveling is easier than paying the price of getting off oil.

• **No great power loses control of its borders.** We have. The beautifully tended lawns of our Phoenix hotel, its well-staffed kitchen, are as likely as not the work of illegal aliens. These are admirable, hard-working people for the most part. But they are here illegally. And so unsure of itself has America become that we feel a need to adjust to them—to their language, to their demands on our social services. And most come from a country that refuses to allow American firms to invest in its oil and gas industries so as to increase available supplies. Surely a great country would find some way of saying, "No oil, then no immigrants, no remittances." Never in history have so many illegals dared to organize protest marches and assembled in so easily arrestable a mass, secure in the knowledge that their host country's addiction to low-cost pool-cleaning trumps its desire to control its borders.

• **No great nation allows itself to become dependent on the goodwill of hostile nations in order to carry out its foreign policy.** Yet America is rattled when left-wing governments in Spain and Italy withdraw support for our attempt to establish a government in Iraq that does not support terrorists. Earlier this month in London, a coalition of Welsh and Scottish peacemongers enlisted the support of opportunistic and anti-American Tories—the party of Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher—to come within a whisker of passing a parliamentary motion that would have made it even more difficult than it now is for Tony Blair to stick with us in Iraq. Would the government of a great power have received these

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same Tories in Washington only a few months ago, giving them much-needed credibility at home?

• **No great power allows others to insult it gratuitously.** I happened to be in America when one of our leading universities—housed in the safety of nuclear-free Cambridge—gave a platform to Iran's former president, and in Britain when St. Andrews gave him, get this, an honorary doctor of laws, no doubt a morale-killer for the political prisoners rounded up during his tenure. Yet we continue to pour government funds into Harvard to appease Ted Kennedy, and our ambassador to the Court of St. James's said not a public word to the Brits about their taste in honorees.

• **No great nation allows itself to get into hock to a potential enemy.** Yet we owe hundreds of billions to the Chinese because we don't have the nerve to tell them to get the value of their currency in line with market forces or keep their sneakers, toys, and television sets. And no great nation stands idly by while another pilfers billions of dollars worth of its most valuable product—its intellectual property. Yet we watch while DVDs of first-run, copyrighted American films are sold for $1 in Beijing even before the film has been released in theaters here at home.

There's more. But you get the idea. Travel the world with your eyes open and you will see that America is no longer a great power. Not that it can't still be one—with our astonishingly lethal soldiers, our daring entrepreneurs, our workers willing to put in long hours, and a productive economy that is still the envy of the world.

But so long as we prefer to fund shopping sprees rather than a military adequate to meet the challenges of our era, and so long as we allow uncertainty about our virtues as a nation to swamp our good judgment, we will continue to doff our jackets obligingly to security personnel who are surprised—just ask them—that we allow our people to suffer such indignities. ♦

'Sex in the Park'

The latest doings of the Danish imams.

BY HENRIK BERING

Copenhagen

YOU HAVE TO hand it to them: Few men in recent history have been more successful in creating mayhem than the small group of Denmark-based imams who turned the appearance of cartoons of Muhammad in a Danish newspaper into a world event. In a recent Egyptian opinion poll of nations seen as most hostile, Denmark registered third, right behind the United States and Israel, an impressive score for a small Nordic country that is normally known for its pacifism and humanitarian efforts.

Pretending to be on a mission to create understanding and dialogue, the imams set out from Denmark for the Middle East last December, where they spread false rumors of the Koran being burned on the streets of Copenhagen and otherwise did their best to incite violence against their host nation, resulting in attacks on embassies, trade boycotts, and flag burnings. They were later caught on hidden camera by a French documentary filmmaker, bragging about their exploits.

Not ones to rest on their laurels, this band of bearded brothers have continued to enjoy great success at getting their names into the headlines; their activities have been followed with particular interest by the *Jyllands-Posten*, the paper that originally published the cartoons and has had to live under a strict security regimen ever since. As always, there is an element of Monty Pythonesque farce in these imams posturing as holy warriors while being welfare-state spongers, and constantly tripping up in their own lies. Farce, that is, if it were not so deadly serious.

Henrik Bering is a journalist and critic.

First a bit of good news: As reported in the *Jyllands-Posten*, Sheikh Raed Hlayhel, who has been in Denmark since 2000 and was the prime instigator behind the cartoon protest, recently announced that he had had it with Denmark and was leaving to settle down in his hometown of Tripoli in Lebanon. "And I am not coming back," he fumed, as if depriving the country of some tremendous cultural asset.

As a commentator noted, Hlayhel has not exactly been a model of successful integration. Having received his religious training in Medina in Saudi Arabia—where he imbibed pure, unadulterated Wahhabism—Hlayhel applied for asylum in Denmark and was at first denied. But as his young son suffers from spina bifida, and the Danish authorities felt the boy could not get the proper treatment in Lebanon, he was allowed in on humanitarian grounds.

Hlayhel thus did not have Danish citizenship and did not speak a word of Danish. But in Denmark's fundamentalist parallel society, Arabic will do just fine, especially when you preach jihad. The center of Hlayhel's activities was the Grimhøjvej mosque in the small town of Brabrand in Jutland, which has been closely monitored by Danish intelligence.

Among the users of the mosque were Slimane Hadj Abderrahmane, the so-called Guantánamo Dane—a holy warrior of Danish/Algerian parentage who was caught by American troops in Afghanistan—and Abu Rached, who has been identified by Spanish prosecutors as one of al Qaeda's main operatives in Europe.

What prompted Hlayhel's decision to pull up his tent pegs? He lost his lawsuit against the *Jyllands-Posten* for having printed the cartoons. And in

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matters like these, family considerations are clearly secondary. About his invalid son, who was receiving free care from the Danish national health system, Hlayhel stated, "His Muslim identity is more important than his treatment. I think all Muslims should live in a Muslim country. Farewell Denmark."

But before the Danes get too relieved, intelligence experts cited in the *Jyllands-Posten* warned that the sheikh can still make mischief from the Middle East. In his last prayer in Denmark, Hlayhel denounced the pope, warned against repetitions of the cartoons, and threatened retaliation: "We are people who love death and will sacrifice ourselves before Allah's feet. Do not repeat the tragedy, or else it will become a tragedy for you and the whole world."

Meanwhile, Hlayhel's fellow demagogue Ahmed Abu Laban, a Palestinian refugee who came to Denmark in 1984 and who is also not a Danish citizen, has written a book about the traveling imams' achievements entitled *The Jyllands-Posten Crisis*, which has come out so far only in Arabic and has been published in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Masri al-Youm*.

Laban rails against a new group in Denmark called the Democratic Muslims, which was created in the wake of the cartoon crisis and whose leader, Naser Khader, he describes as "a rat" and "an apostate." This, according to a scholar cited in the *Jyllands-Posten*, amounts to a death threat, as in the fundamentalist view apostasy is a capital crime. Democratic Muslims are further characterized in the book as "such nice people, clean shaven, very clever, who are ready to have sex in the park, whenever they feel like it." The phrase "sex in the park" is common Arab code for homosexuality, which in *sharia* law also merits a death sentence.

Laban's name has been linked to Omar Abdel Rahman, the blind cleric who in 1993 was behind the first bombing of the World Trade Center; to Ayman al-Zawahiri, one of the planners of 9/11; and to Mohammed al-Fizazi, who was responsible for the 2003 Casablanca bombing. Laban at one point also claimed knowledge of an imminent terror operation on Danish soil.

His purpose with the book is to strengthen his own claims to leadership in the highly competitive world of extremist imams. Laban has also threatened in the past to leave Denmark, but, alas, thought better of it.

Downy bearded youth was also represented in the traveling cartoon road show in the person of 28-year-old Ahmed Akkari, who makes up for his tiny stature and squeaky voice with his great persistence. Akkari was born in Lebanon but has obtained Danish citizenship and is fluent in Danish. Among his political prognostications is that the leader of the Democratic Muslims would be blown up, should he ever become a government minister.

Most Danes were of the impression that Akkari had left the country last year to settle with his girlfriend in Lebanon, as he, too, felt insufficiently appreciated in Denmark. But lo and behold, when Denmark arranged for an evacuation of 5,000 people during this summer's war in Lebanon, who was among the rescued but Akkari, his girlfriend, and his little daughter. The *Jyllands-Posten* carried a telling photograph from the rescue operation with Akkari seen against the Danish flag gently wafting in the breeze—the very flag that he and his friends had caused to be burned all over the Middle East.

Predictably, Akkari found fault with the caliber of the Danish rescue mission. In the *Extra Bladet*, a Danish tabloid, he stated indignantly, "You should write about the horrible plane the Danish Foreign Ministry first wanted to send us home in. It was Jordanian and so old that it was life threatening."

In letters to the editor, Danes wondered the obvious: Why would a man who has so much to complain about want to return? They were also astounded by the number of Danish resident aliens found in Lebanon during the evacuation. There were calls to investigate how many were actually living in Lebanon while claiming unemployment benefits in Denmark. Predictably, the Danish liberal press deemed such questions crass and insensitive towards people who had been so massively traumatized by Israeli bombardments, but the issue will be debated in parliament in December.

Finally, the Danes have learned that Abu Bashar, a Syrian cleric living in the regional capital of Odense and working as a prison chaplain, has been fired after complaints from inmates at Nyborg State Prison that he was inciting hatred of Denmark, and after his statement in an article in the *Fyens Stiftstidende* that "Denmark is the next terror target."

Bashar's claim to fame stems from the cartoon crisis, when he showed a photograph of a man in a pig's mask on BBC television, and afterwards slipped it in among the material being presented by the touring imams in the Middle East, though it had nothing to do with the cartoons. It turned out to be a photo of a French comedian in a pig-calling contest. Bashar later claimed that he was misinterpreted and that the photo had been sent to him anonymously, showing how Muslims were insulted in Denmark. His forked tongue has severely damaged his credibility here.

To no one's surprise, Bashar claimed that his firing from his prison job was political. However, as a man who did not hold grudges, he was willing to forget the incident, if he could have his job back part-time, with disability pay. His knee was troubling him something awful. Sorry, no go.

The question remains why the Danish government puts up with these scoundrels and does not simply boot them out. France has rid itself of more than 20 extremist imams, as has Germany, while Spain and Italy each have deported four, and Holland three. Denmark so far has kicked none out. Surely, enough is enough. ♦

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Return to Ramadi

In the past six months, U.S. forces have made progress in one of the toughest cities in Iraq

By Michael Fumento

Ramadi

Operation Phantom Fury, the U.S. assault on Falluja in Iraq's Al Anbar Province in November 2004, is widely perceived as the greatest coalition victory against Iraq's insurgent and terrorist forces. It did indeed end enemy control over the city. But civilian casualties were high because of the massive use of firepower. About a fourth of the city's homes were destroyed and another fourth damaged. And while many of the enemy died, the advance notice of the attack plus the ability to escape across the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in small boats meant that most of the fighters killed were probably seeking martyrdom. The rest simply scattered like rats. Most of those rebuilt their nests 30 miles west of Falluja and 30 miles closer to Syria, in Anbar's capital, Ramadi.

Ramadi actually has many advantages over Falluja for the enemy. With about 400,000 residents, it provides almost twice the population to hide among. Falluja has a significant Shiite population; Ramadi is almost purely Sunni. And Ramadi has shorter supply lines to foreign terrorists, equipment, and cash from Syria and Jordan to the west. Once the foreign terrorists reach Ramadi, they can use it as a way station to other Sunni areas throughout the country or simply stop there and take up residence.

Last spring I visited Falluja and the surrounding area for the second time and Ramadi for the first time, writing articles on each in these pages. I noted that Falluja had clearly become more violent, but that this wasn't particularly alarming considering that about half of the population had returned and with it some of the enemy who could hide among them. Further, security in parts of the city was being turned over to the Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police (IP). Obviously this was a positive development, but when the IA or IP take over an area, the bad guys fiercely try to demoralize them and drive them out.

Ramadi was a different situation entirely. AP's Todd Pitman, with whom I was embedded, correctly noted that the "sheer scale of violence in Ramadi is astounding." And Pitman specializes in going to violent places. Leaving your base camp ("going outside the wire") during daytime practically guaranteed an attack. I went on two patrols and we got hit both times. The military says Ramadi "remains the most contentious city right now inside Iraq."

For this very reason, Ramadi is both a litmus test for the counterinsurgency effort in Iraq and a laboratory. If we can defeat the insurgent and terrorist forces here, there is no place we cannot defeat them. And from what I found, we *are* defeating them. It's painfully slow, and our men there are still dying in inordinate numbers from a broad variety of attacks. But a multitude of factors, including tribal cooperation, the continual introduction of more Iraqi army and police, the beginning of public works projects, the building of more Forward Operating Bases (FOBs), the installation of more small operational posts (OPs), and plunking down company-sized Combat Operation Posts (COPs) smack in the middle of hostile territory are destroying both the size and the mobility of the enemy. This time the rats are dying in place.

Return to Ramadi

I arrived in Ramadi in early October. It was good to be back. Transportation to and from Iraq and within it is the hardest part of any embed; indeed it's utterly nightmarish. After a wasted week, though, I'd made it and was breathing in that wonderful dust, which those

Michael Fumento's most recent report from Iraq, "Band of Brothers: With the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division in Ramadi," appeared in our June 19, 2006, issue.

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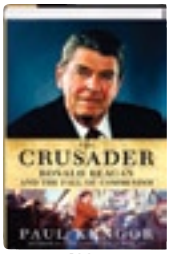

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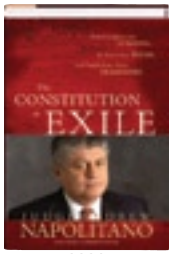

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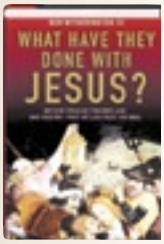

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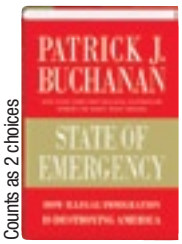

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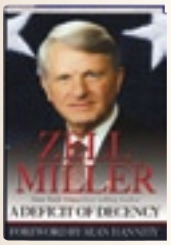

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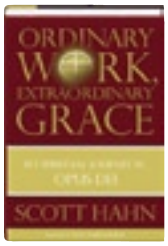

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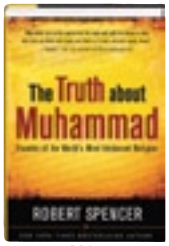

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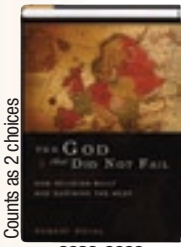

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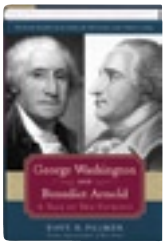

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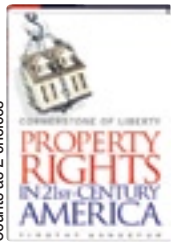

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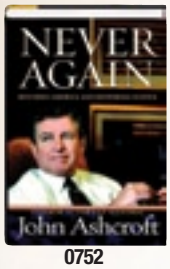

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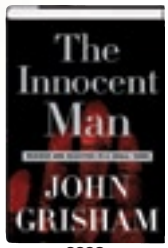

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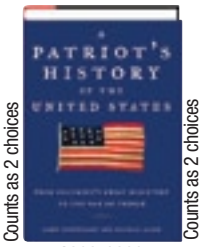

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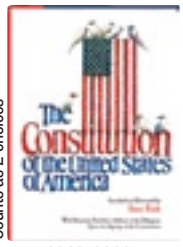

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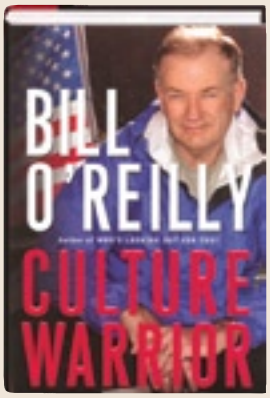

We are in a war for America's future, and *Culture Warrior* is Bill O'Reilly's account of the tactics the enemy uses. Who is the enemy? The ACLU, George Soros, the Hollywood Left, liberal media and all those reckless judges whose glory is setting child molesters free.

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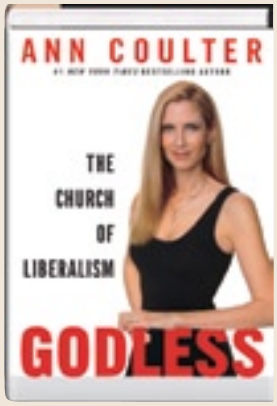

In her most explosive book yet, Ann Coulter focuses not only on the Left's attacks on our Judeo-Christian traditions, but also on the fact that liberalism has morphed into its own godless religion, and worse yet, it is now entrenched as the state religion of America!

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Bennett artfully and subtly makes connections between history and current events, reminding us not that what's old is new so much as that we are intimately and immediately connected to the extraordinary Americans who have bestowed upon us our great heritage.

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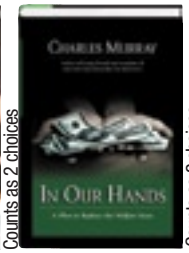

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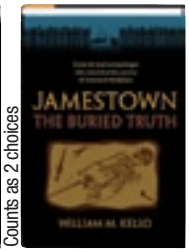

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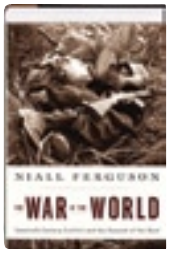

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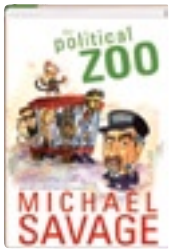

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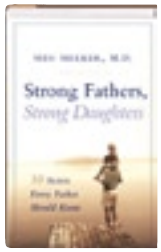

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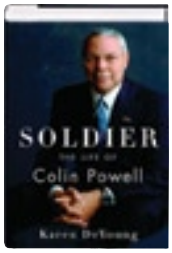

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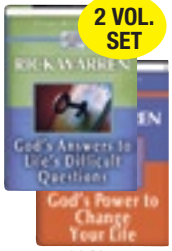

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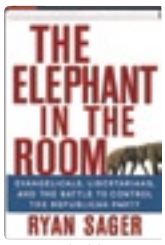

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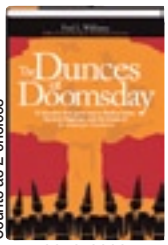

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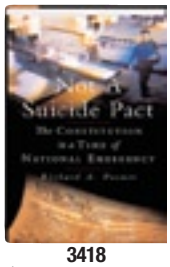

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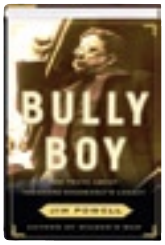

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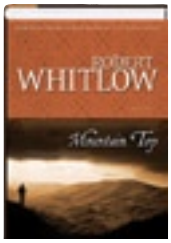

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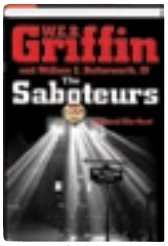

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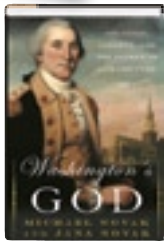

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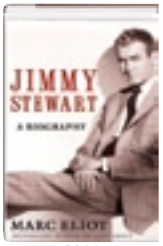

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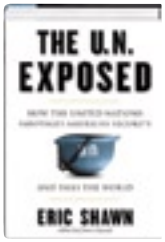

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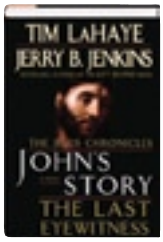

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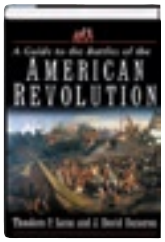

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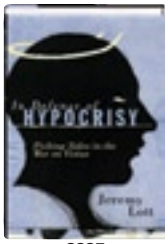

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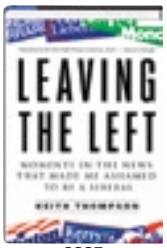

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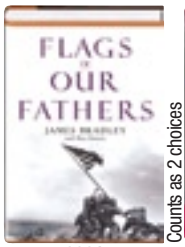

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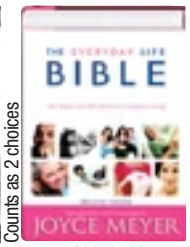

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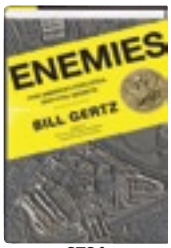

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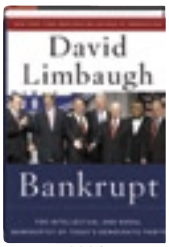

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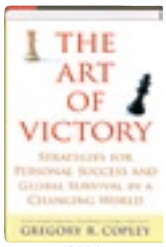

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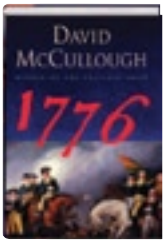

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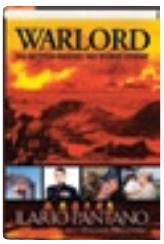

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who haven't experienced it call "sand." It goes deep into your lungs, making you cough like Doc Holliday. Add water when the rains come and it produces a mud with the consistency of peanut butter. The heat was slightly above 100, but with virtually no humidity it was nothing to complain about.

I wanted to see if Ramadi had changed in the last half year, and this was a good time to do so because it was the holy month of Ramadan, a period of fasting and prayer for the devout, and for the enemy a time to show Allah just how willing he is to die—and to kill—for Him. I expected another worthless in-briefing at Camp Ramadi such as I'd gotten from the previous tenants, the 2/28 Pennsylvania National Guard. It consisted of a film of the unit's grand history, and I was stunned that they would cut almost two days off my time in the city to arrange for me to watch it. Since then, 2/28 has departed and been replaced by the 1st Brigade Combat Team (1st BCT), whose commander, Col. Sean MacFarland, calls it "Ready First Combat Team." Happily, the briefing—provided by briefing officers Capt. Travis Patriquin and Col. Peter Lee—had nothing to do with the history of the unit and everything to do with Ramadi.

Shortly after my last trip, the situation had deteriorated to a point where there was much discussion—prompted largely by false *Los Angeles Times* articles from correspondents reporting from the remoteness and comfort of a Baghdad hotel and from Washington—of a Falluja-style attack on Ramadi. But this was never in the cards, being neither desirable nor possible. Indeed, there wasn't even an increase in troops, except during the short period of overlap in early June when 1st BCT had fully deployed and 2/28 hadn't completely left. 1st BCT comprises much of the 1st Armored Division's First Brigade, the 1-6th Infantry and 1-35th Armor. Other elements include Marines, engineers, part of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), and part of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division. The Navy provides corpsmen (medics) and SEALs, while the Air Force also augments the force.

Within weeks, 1st BCT did launch an offensive, but it moved slowly and relied far less on artillery and air support than did the Falluja assault. Mechanized troops pushed north into the suburbs, cutting off two major entrances to Ramadi for the first time during the war. The enemy was chased into areas already patrolled by U.S. soldiers who knew the lay of the land better than he did. This provided breathing room for the next step—building additional Forward Operating Bases and outposts in the badlands.

Patriquin and Lee described how coalition forces break down the "anti-Iraqi forces"—the forces opposing the elected government of Iraq—into four categories. First there are the unaffiliated foreign fighters. Second is al Qaeda in Iraq, comprising both local and foreign terrorists. Third are local resistance fighters who are generally disgruntled ex-Baathists trying to get back the good life. Fourth are organized criminals and smugglers who are just in it for the bucks. Al Qaeda in Iraq, though relatively small, "is a significant threat to area residents because of its use of suicide bombers," MacFarland said. Iraqis do not venerate suicide in the way some Muslim peoples do—or for that matter the way Japan did until quite recently. When al Qaeda came to town, said MacFarland, "they intimidated, through murder and other acts of violence, the people of Ramadi and forced them into their homes, away from their places of employment."

Said Patriquin: "With the local al Qaeda some are motivated by money and some by ideology. You're not going to change them. You either force them out or you kill them." These fighters are commonly known as JTJ, short for Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, a group that operated in the area before al Qaeda set up shop and has since merged with it. The foreigners come seeking martyrdom, and the only way of dealing with them is to fulfill their wish. Conversely, the criminals and smugglers can be shown it's not worth their while to ply their trade. As for the local resistance, "they originally sought to expel foreign forces, but can be easily swayed and are responsible for most of red on red [enemy Iraqi versus enemy Iraqi] violence," according to Patriquin. "We had a sheikh [pronounced *shake*] north of the river who was trying to put his men into the IP [Iraqi Police], and he was killed. Then the killers kept his body for several days, an insult almost as great as the murder itself. It angered local tribes so much that it galvanized them against the AIF [anti-Iraqi forces] and in favor of the coalition."

This led to the formation of a tribal council called the Sahawa Al Anbar, or Al Anbar Awakening, which "was designed to wake up the people of Anbar, who have been, for the last two years, allowing al Qaeda in Iraq and other elements to control the city and province of Al Anbar," Patriquin explained. "It started in August 2006 with 40 sheikhs representing 20 tribes from Al Anbar, and currently has over 50 sheikhs representing at least 25 tribes. There is currently tribal representation covering all of Al Anbar province, and they have provided more than 70 percent of our IP recruits in the last few months."

Even the *Los Angeles Times*—hardly pro-war or pro-Bush—in an October 5 article reported that local tribes are mad as hell about the insurgency and are not going to take it anymore. It observed that Abdul Jabber Hakkam, spokesman for a coalition of 11 tribes in Al Anbar, was saying locals were capturing and executing the anti-Iraqi forces on their own initiative. "People have done this with

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their own personal weapons," he said. "Now each house that hosts a terrorist, they will force all the residents of the house outside, so they're on the streets." When that is done, he predicted, the insurgents will "have no one to keep them, and they will withdraw." Further, said Hakkam, "we are not just targeting al Qaeda, but terrorists in general, because people miss real stability and freedom." Importantly, he not only urged the locals to work with the tribes, but also said the tribes need to work closely with the government in Baghdad.

If you're thinking this doesn't reflect doomsaying media interpretations of Marine Col. Peter Devlin's unreleased August intelligence report indicating there's no functioning government in the Anbar, you're right. The province has long been the domain of nomadic tribes. They have no EPA or Department of Education certainly. We're not going to change that system soon and there's little reason to do so. (Residents, for one thing, can simply establish a business overnight and taxes are low to nonexistent.) If they cooperate in the war effort, we've achieved our goal.

Turning Iraq over to the Iraqis

Probably the most important aspect of the plan to pacify Ramadi is the same as that for pacifying the country as a whole and drawing down U.S. troops—continuing to turn over more responsibilities and more geographic area to the Iraqi army and police. They'll need armor and artillery support for the next several years and U.S. assets like air support and special ops for much longer. But in Ramadi, at least, the transfers seem to be working. During the fighting in June the Iraqi Army 1st Brigade, 7th Division (1/7) aided the Americans. They had arrived in Ramadi in late March. Now they've been joined by the Iraqi Army 1/1, the oldest Iraqi Army unit in the country and considered by many to be the best. With a total complement of several thousand soldiers, the two Iraqi Army battalions now have their own areas of responsibility in western Ramadi, though American heavy support is always nearby.

The Iraqi Army is better-armed than the last time I was in the Anbar. Back then they lectured me on their need for 12.7 millimeter heavy machine guns called DUSHKAs, which the enemy has had all along, while I lectured them back on the need to kill the enemy rather than just defend themselves. In April, they were just taking delivery of armored Humvees; now these military vehicles are ubiquitous. Their equipment needs are still great; indeed, I was asked not to convey some details lest the enemy find out what they lack. But as the Iraqi soldiers earn the trust of the Americans, they're getting vastly superior equipment, often when a unit rotates out and bequeaths it to them.

Nobody pretends the Iraqi Army will ever approach the U.S. military in its willingness and ability to fight; but in fairness, how many armies do? Further, it's not as if the anti-Iraqi forces' abilities will ever approach those of the Viet Cong. It's considered remarkable when the enemy is so much as able to coordinate an attack, rather than just tossing a bunch of untrained men at an objective. The Iraqi Army units in Ramadi are capable of defending themselves and going on the attack with just a couple of American advisers. That's real progress. Unfortunately, these units are almost exclusively Shiite at the enlisted level, with Sunni officers, which is not ideal for this Sunni region. But still they have the ability to speak with and relate to Iraqis of any sectarian persuasion better than Americans ever will.

There are now six Iraqi police stations in the city comprising several hundred police, and Ramadi has the fastest growing police recruitment program in Anbar. Ultimately, the city is slated to have a force of 4,000 police, but that's a long way down the road. Elsewhere, the police have suffered from infiltration by the enemy, corruption, cowardice, and incompetence. But in Ramadi these don't appear to have been problems. "The Iraqi Security Forces [both Iraqi Army and police] here in Ramadi are making measurable, great progress," MacFarland told me. "The fact that IPs are still flowing in, that IA units are now responsible for their own land, and that their integration with the locals has led to the discovery of multiple arms caches shows this." By contrast, he says, al Qaeda forces "stick out like a sore thumb" when they try to blend in. "Everybody knows who the terrorists are," he says. Moreover, it seems not even the most outspoken critic claims enemy strength is growing in Ramadi. Iraqi Army and police strength grows measurably by the month.

In a move unique to Ramadi, 1st BCT bulldozed uninhabitable buildings near the government center just before I arrived. This area had repeatedly been used not just for sniping at Iraqi and American officials entering and exiting government buildings but to support full-scale attacks. "The government center was one of the most dangerous areas of Ramadi," Lee said. "The enemy would come in from their strongholds and seize buildings across the street and attack." The area now looks like Dresden after the firestorm, but engineers have started hauling away millions of tons of rubble. Once it's cleared, the plan is to turn the land into a park. The project doesn't just make sense from a military standpoint; it has a certain symbolism as well. A former killing ground for the anti-Iraqi forces will be turned over to the people of Ramadi for picnics and games.

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Showing further aggressiveness, in July, 1st BCT, using the Iraqi Army as the spearhead, also seized what amounted to the anti-Iraqi forces' only real fortress in Ramadi: Saddam Hospital. "It was basically an enemy base with facilities only for the enemy, command and control, and snipers," said Lee. One sniper killed Marines from a fourth-floor window at the hospital until he was counter-sniped. The facility was even used to launch mortar attacks. To the extent it was used as a hospital at all, it was only for the enemy. Abu Musab al Zarqawi allegedly received treatment there after he was wounded in May 2005.

The Americans had tried to build another hospital in the city, only to see it blown up when it was almost finished. The anti-Iraqi forces have no interest in trying to win the hearts and minds of Ramadi's citizenry when they can accomplish their ends through threats, mutilation, and murder. Now the captured facility, renamed Ramadi General Hospital, has been turned over to civilians and is being upgraded from the 1950s era. It serves all the citizens of Ramadi; enemy suspects are treated and reported to authorities.

Almost all of these achievements are verifiable and would seem to indicate serious strides in retaking Ramadi. MacFarland says attacks have dropped from a daily average of about 20 to about 15, although there was a definite uptick during Ramadan as I will describe presently. "There is still certainly fighting, but the days of platoon-sized attacks are over," Patriquin says. "We welcomed it when they came at us with groups of 20 because it gave us a chance to kill them. But they just don't have the capability of getting that many men together anymore." The commander of Ramadi's Camp Corregidor would later tell me the same thing about one of his areas of operation, in southeastern Ramadi, known as the Mulaab. "You just don't see groups of tens and twenties anymore," he said. "Now they tend to be onesies and twosies."

Among the overhead transparencies Patriquin and Lee showed were "before and now" images of Ramadi with translucent red oval overlays, which MacFarland calls "the blob chart," to show progress. "The areas that are red are those where we still consider AIF to have the control," I was told. That was about 25 percent of the city. "Over the time Ready First Combat Team has been here, we have squeezed this area into a significantly smaller portion of the city. The blobs' reduction demonstrates the success we have had against the insurgency, creating a better security situation and limiting the areas where the AIF have freedom of movement." Lee added, "We own southern Ramadi; make no mistake. But in the north, there's still a jungle out there."

Indeed, the coalition is now so confident of security in the area that it has begun $15 million in public works, including hauling the rubble near the government center, $1.4 million for a water treatment and power generation plant, and $6.5 million for Ramadi General. Applying the "broken windows" theory of crime, even trash disposal is a major part of the budget.

Back to Corregidor

One strong indicator that we're making progress in Ramadi came as I went from Camp Ramadi on the outskirts to FOB Corregidor, deep in the city. A real time-killer for embeds in Iraq, and probably their greatest frustration, is that virtually all transportation from one post to another—be it by helicopter or land—must be at night. That's when our night-vision equipment puts the enemy at a tremendous disadvantage. One reason for wasted time on my last trip was the wait for a nighttime convoy called "The Dagger" to take me in. But this time our "convoy" comprised just three lightly armed but heavily armored large trucks called Cougars and a lead truck called a Buffalo, which has a long arm with a claw at the end to disarm the improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that remain the most deadly part of the enemy's arsenal. When I went into Camp Ramadi and then back out to another forward operating base, it was again in a small convoy and also in broad daylight. These daytime and lightly armed excursions suggest that in terms of small arms attacks, the ferocious Ramadi I saw as recently as last spring is being tamed.

Another indicator of progress is the expanded areas of operation for the primary unit at Corregidor—1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, and its support elements. The battalion's predecessor primarily patrolled two areas, the Mulaab and the Industrial Area that includes OP Hotel—an observation post in a former hotel. These two kept the unit so busy that they rarely went into their other areas, Sufia and Julaybah. But now 1/506th regularly patrols all these areas in addition to manning Entry Control Point 8, which straddles the Industrial Area, Sufia, and Julaybah. The enemy struggled mightily to destroy ECP-8 while it was under construction but failed.

Corregidor, still perhaps the nastiest place I've stayed in the course of three Anbar embeds, was nonetheless like coming home. I was back in a tiny crackerbox of a room that I had to share with a military photojournalist visiting from Baghdad, with about four square inches of open floor space once I'd dropped my equipment. Body armor is still required outdoors throughout the camp, although mortar attacks have lessened. And we still had a sandbagged roof that would probably stop a 60 millime-

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Photo by Michael Fumento

Michael A. Monsoor, Navy SEAL, Killed in Action, Sept. 29, 2006

Even by the standards of the world's most celebrated special ops unit, Michael Monsoor exemplified "above and beyond the call of duty." I shared a rooftop with him and members of SEAL Team 3 in Ramadi during a firefight last April 22. The photo here, with Monsoor on the right, was taken on the street minutes earlier, after shooting had broken out. Weeks later, Petty Officer Second Class Monsoor and another SEAL brought to safety a team member even as bullets ricocheted around them—an act of heroism for which he would later be awarded the Silver Star.

On September 29, he performed his greatest—and last—service. While in a sniper hideout with three other SEALs, the 25-year-old machine gunner was closest to an opening in the top. Their position was discovered and clearly something bad would happen unless they were extracted first. It happened. A hand grenade flew through the opening and bounced off Monsoor's chest. He could have tried throwing it back, though by now it was surely near exploding. He could have dived away, saving his own life but forfeiting those of the others. Instead Monsoor smothered the explosive with his own body. "He never took his eye off the grenade; his only movement was down toward it," a lieutenant who was there said. "He undoubtedly saved mine and the other SEALs' lives, and we owe him." We all do. *—Michael Fumento*

ter mortar, but wouldn't have a chance against an 81 or 122. There have been some slight improvements. There is a Post Exchange now, though it seems to sell only about 15 items. There is also a "Hajji-mart," as it is informally called because Iraqis operate it. It sells considerably more items that make the GIs' lives easier.

Patrols from Corregidor still wreak havoc on embedded reporters. Last time I arrived just after photographer Toby Morris had been shot twice in the leg by a sniper, snapping the bones in two places. This time, the previous embed, cameraman Joe Talley, had caught a sniper round in the ribcage that tumbled and popped out his chest. But both had risked their lives for noncombat photos and footage (a *portrait* in Morris's case) when they knew the enemy was actively operating in the area. Ramadi is intolerant of such mistakes.

The men at Corregidor seemed genuinely glad to see me. The vast majority of them would never tell their own families their story. But they were glad someone else did. A few asked in a friendly manner, "Why the hell did you come back here?" I replied, "Still figuring that one out."

Practically the first person I ran into was the commander of Corregidor and the 1/506th, Lt. Col. Ronald Clark. That's because he's one of those people who seem to be everywhere at once. Outwardly, he is the antithesis of the man you'd expect to find leading a unit of elite warriors. He says grace before meals and always has a smile on his face. When I ran into him and we sat down in the chow hall, SSgt. Ken Cooke, head of Corregidor's sniper section, leaned down and gave him a big bear hug. (Indeed, Cooke is about the size of a bear, albeit without any pre-hibernation fat.) "Can you imagine that?" said a bemused Clark. "Head of the sniper team, 120 kills. And he just comes up to you and gives you a big hug!"

Actually, snipers need hugs, as they are the primary targets for other snipers. But here's what's remarkable. During its deployment, Cooke's handful of snipers (the exact number is under wraps) with those 120 kills have accounted for about a fifth of the total known kills of the 1/506th. Meanwhile enemy snipers, though generally the most skilled of the enemy fighters and armed primarily with good 7.62 millimeter Soviet Dragunov sniper rifles, have killed 1 member of the battalion. The battalion plus its support units have lost a total of 8 men while killing

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about 600—a stunning ratio of 75:1. Think about that the next time you hear of the prowess of the enemy.

Say all you want about the incredible U.S. blundering at the top levels since the invasion ended, including stunning obliviousness to the possibility of an insurgency and a woeful lack of troops. But don't blame the soldiers and Marines. The 1/506th's kill ratio shows that, given the freedom to apply their ingenuity, skill, and bravery, they can mop up the enemy like a thirsty sponge.

Casualties of war

Nobody was killed operating out of Corregidor while I was there, but three days before my arrival, the 19-man SEAL platoon I had photographed and videotaped in combat earlier this year lost its second member, Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Monsoor. He threw himself on a hand grenade to save three of his buddies. He was the second SEAL killed in Ramadi and second killed in Iraq. The first, Petty Officer 2nd Class Marc Allan Lee, was lost in August. Anyone who harbors the notion that SEALs are as tough on the inside as they are on the outside is wrong. After I wrote an obit on Lee for my blog, many who knew him opened up their hearts to me. When I blogged on the death of Monsoor from Ramadi, I got the same reaction. One of Monsoor's buddies emailed: "When you did your patrol with SEAL Team 3 a few months back, I was really pleased to see some of the great pictures and accounts," he wrote. "I even put one of your pictures . . . on my Blackberry to have a constant reminder about my comrades in combat. [When] I attended the memorial service for Michael Monsoor . . . his platoon put together a photo/video tribute to him, and right in the middle of it flashed your photo of Mike with his machine gun kneeling beside [a] wall." He continued, "I pulled my Blackberry out of my belt and showed it to my buddies sitting with me and they were astonished. That photo had really been an inspiration before Mike gave his life, but it means so much more now. Good on ya for making those embed trips to Ramadi; I'll probably be heading over sometime next year myself."

Now I knew why I'd come back.

Delta Company of 1/506th took it on the chin while I was there. One night a D Company soldier got out of his Humvee to fix concertina wire that looked like it had accidentally been separated. But it was no accident. He stepped on a pressure-plate IED. Initial reports said he'd lose the foot, but later ones indicated he had movement in it and might keep it. In another incident, far more bizarre, somebody tossed a hand grenade from inside or on top of a house right down the open turret of a D Company Humvee. Amazingly it landed between the radio and another metal box, which dissipated the force of the explosion. Although all three occupants caught shrapnel, two were hospitalized with only minor wounds. The third caught it bad enough that it wasn't clear whether he would keep his leg. He also lost a pinkie finger.

A night or two later, members of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, which runs patrols out of Camp Ramadi, were traveling in a Humvee when a massive IED hit it. Then the enemy zapped the hulk with an RPG for good measure. The initial word was two Marines killed in action and one missing. *Missing.* The mere utterance takes your breath away. No fate in Iraq is more terrifying than being captured by the anti-Iraqi forces, who readily invoke the Geneva Convention for their own men taken prisoner but have never heard of it when it comes to those they grab. In fact, the third Marine had been killed. The force of the blast was so great that it took a while to find what was left of him.

"Bag 'em, tag 'em, and drag 'em"

Asked if I wanted to go on a night operation with A Company, I said I wanted to go on all patrols; but I wasn't looking forward to it since the enemy virtually never attacks night patrols and my last night mission out of Corregidor captured nothing more than a bag of old AK-47 rounds. I was told this time we had targeted nine individuals in what Ron Clark called a "Bag 'em, tag 'em, and drag 'em" operation. I groused that we wouldn't grab a single one. Wrong. In terms of materiel, the squad I accompanied captured nothing more than one toy gun, one rifle with a huge bayonet and a stock that had decayed to nothing that probably was last fired in the 19th century, and an AK. Each house is allowed one AK for self-defense, so we gave all the "weapons" back. But at a neighboring house, five of the nine suspects were nabbed, interrogated on the spot, and one was kept. Meanwhile, three other men were grabbed and upon interrogation appeared to be "dirty," as the GIs put it. So in all, four men were taken into custody. Quite an improvement over a bag of bullets.

When combined with the results of a night raid I would make a few nights later with another unit, this seems to indicate that despite desperate efforts by the anti-Iraqi forces to keep citizens of Ramadi from providing valuable tips—efforts including murder, torture, and destroying phone lines and cell phone towers—the enemy is indeed wearing out its welcome in a city it once essentially owned. The 1/506th wasn't making day patrols, it turned out, as a show of respect for the observance of Ramadan. The closest I got was a mounted excursion into the Mulaab to guard a psy-ops truck with a loudspeaker recruiting for the Iraqi police.

Charlie Company commander Capt. Nathan Guthrie, whom I sat behind in the Humvee, wasn't the shy, retir-

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ing type. He barked orders and opinions on about an equal basis. Before we left he told the machine gunner, "When we're going down Easy Street, if you see that sniper you smoke his f—ing ass! I'm not dealing with his ass anymore." I was confused. "If you know where a sniper is, you always 'smoke his ass' don't you?" Guthrie explained: "It's like the D.C. area snipers," meaning the October 2002 killings carried out using a hole cut in a car trunk, the perpetrators of which proved hard to catch. In August, the U.S. forces seized two Iraqi snipers who'd been using such a vehicle. They made the rather dubious claim to have shot 31 Americans in this way. "This place [the Mulaab] has gotten a lot better but it's still a s—t hole," Guthrie commented.

Guthrie kept uttering things that anywhere else would have made him a certified paranoid, but not here. We saw two men on a moped carrying a shovel. There are many uses for a shovel, but my first thought was they were off to bury IEDs. Sure enough, Guthrie commented, "They're probably going to bury IEDs." We also saw an empty dump truck twice. If it's not visibly hauling something, it's suspect. If it has special windows over the regular ones, it's clearly a suicide vehicle-borne IED. "If that dump truck turns down this way and has welded plates on the window, you shoot that motherf—er, you hear me!" Guthrie barked to his gunner. But no motherf—ers died that day; at least not there.

We were attacked, making me three for three on daytime operations. And as on the previous occasions, the attack came an amazingly punctual 45 minutes after we took up our position. This punctuality is not evidence of great masterminds; it means they need 45 minutes to organize an attack. Further, this attack comprised nothing more than two guys popping out with AKs and shooting wildly at our Humvee, while we returned fire with the vehicle's turret-mounted M2 .50 caliber Browning machine gun. Not exactly a fair fight, and the bad guys fled.

Of course, major firefights also begin this way, and Guthrie checked to see if we had close air support available. Since our job wasn't to engage the enemy but to recruit police, and the psy-ops truck had already made plenty of trips through the neighborhood, we left soon after. Ultimately, the police recruitment campaign brought in about 400 men.

COPs and criminals

Because 1/506th wasn't sending out day patrols, I decided to move on to a different unit in a different area operating in a different way. I ended up with the 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division.

The term "COP"—Combat Operation Post—first came up during my in-briefing at Camp Ramadi. I didn't know at the time, and wouldn't understand until I stayed at one, but COPs may be one of the most important reasons we seem finally to be gaining ground in Ramadi.

There's no set size for a COP, but in the Ramadi area, it's an undersized company of four platoons, or about 80 soldiers. 1st BCT has put in 11 COPs so far and is going to install more. The first in Ramadi was created in June. These garrisons are tiny offshoots from much-larger forward operating bases, which in the case of Corregidor has a full battalion plus numerous support elements. That's about 1,000 men in all. The COP to which I was assigned, COP Anvil in northern Ramadi, comprises just two houses commandeered and leased from Iraqi civilians.

Anvil is commanded by Capt. Don Sapp of A Company, 1/6. It has an oversized company of more than 120 men from three American platoons and one Iraqi platoon. Anvil also has four M-2 Bradley fighting vehicles attached to it, giving it real firepower. Each Bradley has a 25 mm automatic cannon, a 7.62 mm machine gun, and twin tubes that fire TOW missiles that can destroy a tank at almost two and a half miles. Anvil draws support from Forward Operating Base Blue Diamond, which in turn draws support from Camp Ramadi.

Historically, successful counterinsurgency efforts have involved pacifying areas by plopping small garrisons with interlocking communications into enemy territory and sending out patrols to gather information and engage the enemy. Perhaps the most famous example of such garrison use was that of King Edward I of England (yes, the guy who had Braveheart drawn and quartered), who used castles to consolidate his hold on a conquered but restive Wales. More recently U.S. Army Special Forces established Civilian Irregular Defense Group camps in South Vietnam, manned primarily by indigenous tribes or South Vietnamese with a core of Special Forces soldiers. Such camps are considered one of the most effective strategies of that war. Certainly they were far more useful than the "search and destroy" missions sent out from huge base camps.

The military refers to COP use as "the inkblot strategy." One dot spreads into a bigger spot. Further, the troops are practically forced to work with the locals. That means building up networks of indigenous people who know the terrain, culture, and other people better than any forces—even one from the same country but another province—ever could. This also allows for more direct contact between the leader of the military force and the local leadership. All of this creates a force multiplier. Since the Bush administration appears unlikely to increase troop strength significantly, this ability to make better use of troops without weakening the forward operating bases from which they're drawn is vital.

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Another value of the Ramadi COPs over the FOBs and Camp Ramadi is that we're fighting an enemy that relies primarily on roadway bombs—whether IEDS, vehicle-borne IEDs, or suicide-vehicle borne IEDs (driven vehicles)—to inflict casualties and damage, with the potential for greatly restricting movement. But missions from COPs are inherently short-range; you're always almost there. That's less road to be on and hence fewer explosives and ambushes to worry about. Even COPs operating at half strength have no chance of being overrun both because of the inability of the enemy to fight skillfully or mass in large numbers and because of the multilayered defenses.

Anvil has concertina barbed wire and HESCO baskets as an inner layer of protection. A HESCO (named for the British company that invented it) is a huge thick bag in a wire mesh into which sand or dirt can be dumped. Linked together, the bags form an extremely effective blast wall and an impregnable barrier. Sapp took advantage of Anvil's rural location to cut down vegetation surrounding his two buildings, creating a nice clear-kill zone. Ingress over irrigation canals is controlled with concertina wire in some of the canals and by knocking down numerous foot bridges and replacing them with three steel Bailey bridges that can be readily watched.

Two men are always on top of the American-occupied building (the Iraqi army controls the other structure) to survey the countryside, which the clear-kill zones make easy. In addition to their personal weapons, they have access to an anti-armor rocket, a Mark-19 40 mm automatic grenade launcher that fires at an amazing rate of 350 rounds a minute out to a range of 2,200 meters, and a .50 caliber M8A1A sniper rifle that can take out targets at a range of 1,800 meters. One .50 caliber shot into an engine block can stop a vehicle in its tracks. (You don't want to hear what it can do to a human being.) While we were in the building talking, Sapp and I heard a 7.62 rifle round go off. One of the observers had seen a man digging near a road and fired a warning shot at him. In the central area of the city, the man would have been dropped. But in rural areas, you expect people to dig with shovels; you just can't let them do it too close to byways.

Sapp showed me the impact of the Combat Operation Post system in Ramadi (Falluja also has some) on a map. The foreign fighters who come into this area do so along the main highway from the Syrian border to the west. It's a mini-Ho Chi Minh Trail, so to speak. From this road the terrorists used to fan out in the area where the COPs have been inserted. "In the last four months, we've kept pushing them right around here," Sapp indicated, with his finger moving in a counter-clockwise pattern. "Initially we wouldn't go anywhere in this area with anything less than a platoon and sometimes even armor," he said. "But now I allow them to enter with just squads." The only part of the fan still remaining abuts the Euphrates. "We give the terrorists a place to focus here," Sapp says of that last slice. "This gives them somewhere to go and I'd rather they go there where my men can deal with them than have them setting up IEDs thickly throughout the area they used to control."

At Anvil almost all missions are on foot and off the trails. That's part of the beauty of the COP system; you can go almost anywhere you need to on foot without alerting enemy sentinels—which are probably nothing more than some guy paid a few bucks a night to keep watch. The night I was there we set off to grab some of bin Laden's buddies.

A wet but successful night raid

Terror suspects fall into two categories: single source and double source. That indicates whether they were identified by one informer or two. The idea behind the distinction is that any vindictive neighbor can accuse somebody of something he didn't do. But with two sources, there's a higher probability the accused really is "dirty." Mind you, Sapp told me, "Ninety percent of the time a single source suspect is also a bad guy." But those are the rules. A double source suspect goes straight to military intelligence. A single source suspect must be released within 72 hours unless he confesses, but at the very least his vitals go into the data bank in case he's later identified as dirty.

Such raids used to be directed solely against the house where the suspect normally lived. But Iraqis are generally quite chummy with their neighbors, who often are also relatives. It's something of a "Mi casa es su casa" arrangement. They keep vast numbers of cushioned rugs piled up that can be used as beds when friends or relatives come calling. Suddenly a house built for five people can hold 25. What this means for nabbing bad guys is that you don't want to just hit the house that's his main domicile but also those next to it.

In this case, the houses are about 400 meters away from the COP, and the best avenue of approach would be through a series of irrigation canals and the offshoot ditches. This canal system would prove my undoing. Jumping from little strips of land to other little strips is an acquired skill.

I was offered night vision equipment, but it was the kind that attaches to your helmet, making you look like a Borg from Star Trek. My helmet wasn't made for it, and in any case I'd never trained with the things, so I relied on my own night vision. As we hopped over the rivulets and water-filled trenches, I slipped twice on the slick

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dust, negotiated a number of obstacles, and then came to a canal. Too dark to see how wide. The soldier in front of me tossed his pack across and leaped. I tried as hard as I could but fell short. "Oof! Ugh! Yech!" Right up to my ribs. It could have been worse; it could have been an open sewer. But my still camera was knocked out temporarily and my video camera and voice recorder were ruined. And I was covered with mud, while Anvil was the only place I've embedded that didn't have even a cold shower. I did feel a bit better when I discovered the next day that three of the soldiers had also fallen in. It was interesting going out in the sunlight afterwards and seeing how treacherous the terrain really was. "I hate that night s—t," a soldier told me.

The raid couldn't have gone better—not that I had the ability to get any images or sound. We hit one house, and before anybody in the second house knew about it we hit that one too. We struck the jackpot in the form of an al Qaeda intelligence officer whose chief job was assassinating Iraqi police. He was perhaps 22 years old. As soon as the plastic cuffs were on him he faked heart problems and then breathing problems. I guess he thought the softhearted *Amerikani* would just let him go. Tough luck.

This man had been double-sourced. We also grabbed a single-source suspect and a very young man who was with the first two. Both admitted the next day to being al Qaeda fighters. We brought them back and put them in an outdoor holding pen. Three terrorists in one night is a nice haul.

Sapp said the Iraqi Army complain about taking as prisoners suspects who are almost certainly dirty. They say that all too soon they'll be back and shooting at them and they have a point. The suspects really do get hearings, and if they're in Sunni areas those judges are Sunni. Some were probably appointed by Saddam. Still, it's better to capture these men than to kill them. One corpse means eliminating one man, but a suspect who talks can lead to anything from rolling up a cell of three or more men to capturing or killing terrorist leaders like al Zarqawi. This isn't the "kinder, gentler war" of which I've heard American soldiers and Marines complain; this is how you stomp out guerrillas and make a place too hot for foreign terrorists.

We heard five IEDs explode that night—all controlled detonations. So the next day we went out on what's called a "meet and greet" patrol, partly just to show our presence and partly to collect information from willing locals about the IEDs. Unfortunately, they're rarely willing to talk. They'll even deny hearing IED explosions that occurred outside their bedroom windows. Some are afraid of being seen as coalition suspects; others may be afraid of retaliation, and some are taking money from the bad guys. As I took pictures of a large family we interrogated on the road, our Iraqi translator said I was probably photographing IED trigger men. "They are poor," he said. "And they are offered money just to push a trigger." By Iraqi standards they didn't seem poor at all. I saw well-fed cows, goats, and sheep everywhere. Corn was already growing, if not as high as an elephant's eye, and other crops will start springing up when the rainy season begins shortly.

Are we winning?

People always ask how the Iraqis feel about Americans and the war in general. I respond that they just tell you what they think will prove advantageous to them, a combination of complaints and praise for *Ameriki* (America). Non-embedded American reporters run into the same thing. I asked one of the north Ramadi farmers through the translator if he thinks Ramadi is getting safer. He starts out with a few complaints, such as lack of water from the Euphrates for his fields because of rationing, and then tells me: "But safety is 100 percent better now that the Americans have come along." Baloney. Things got a lot more dangerous when we first came along. They may or may not be safer now than a year ago, but this guy isn't going to tell me. None of them will tell me.

Soldiers also give different accounts of the extent of progress in Ramadi. A Cougar driver told me nothing had changed since his last deployment, yet the very fact that he was driving into Ramadi in a convoy of just four trucks indicated otherwise. Another told me Ramadi is now "a thousand times better." Ultimately each was simply another blind man feeling his part of the elephant. With my three embeds in Anbar, I'd like to believe I've felt quite a few parts of the elephant.

Ramadi is not Baghdad, with its roiling sectarian violence and militias. As we've come to learn, Iraq probably cannot find peace until those militias are disbanded and suppressed. But neither will it find peace if the insurgents and terrorists of the Sunni strongholds like Ramadi continue to ply their trade; and despite the media focus on sectarian killings in October, Sunni insurgents still accounted for more than 80 percent of American military deaths in Iraq that month.

Put it all together—the Forward Observation Bases, new Combat Operation Posts, new Observation Posts, tribal cooperation, ever more Iraqi army and police, better intelligence, and public works projects. There's no "stay the course" strategy here; the course changes as necessary and it's continually changed for the better. I believe we are winning the Battle of Ramadi. And if the enemy can be beaten here, he can be beaten anywhere. ♦

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Another French Revolution?

The rioters and their admirers—on the right and the left

By Michel Gurfinkiel

Paris

Mama Galledou, a 26-year-old student from Senegal, had just completed work on her degree in nutrition at the Saint Jerome Faculty of Science and Technology in Marseille. She will probably never lead a normal life again—if she survives at all: She was nearly burned alive on October 28 as she was traveling by bus through Marseille's 13th district, where the Saint Jerome campus is located. It was 9:00 P.M. The bus was almost empty. At the bus stop near Cité des Lilas, a public housing estate, three young men had earlier blocked the doors and asked the driver to wait for their friends. The driver obliged for a minute or two, and then got impatient, shut the doors, and left. The youths shouted that they would take their revenge. So they did, a bit later on, as the bus was driving the same road back and stopped again at Cité des Lilas. Two of the boys got on by the rear entrance, sprinkled gasoline, and set it alight. The horrified passengers rushed out. Somehow, Galledou's clothes caught fire. According to one witness, "it was as if someone peeled her skin with an invisible knife: from a black woman she was turning into a white one." At the local hospital, they reported burns over 62 percent of her body. She remains in a coma, fighting to survive.

Galledou's tragic fate is a microcosm of the crisis now engulfing France. In recent weeks, torching buses has suddenly become prevalent in the Paris suburbs and other urban areas. Just two days before the attack in Marseille, *Le Monde*, the country's authoritative (if left-wing) paper of record, ran a front-page story about this new development and noted that it usually requires a much higher level of organization and discipline than casual car torching. In Bagnolet, on October 25, a gang of ten torched a night bus on the 122 line (in Seine-Saint-Denis, a northeastern suburb of Paris). In Nanterre, Hauts-de-Seine (the western suburbs), a similar attack took place the same day on a bus on the 258 line. On October 22, a bus was torched at Grigny, Essonne (the southern suburbs). As a result, the local company in charge of public transportation suspended night traffic on no fewer than 17 bus lines. It remains to be seen whether the attackers in Marseille—six suspects have been arrested—were just teenagers perpetrating a copycat crime, or if they were connected with a network.

There have also been cases of organized large-scale stoning, or *caillassage*, as it is called in contemporary French slang: On October 25, a group of 50 people or more stoned private cars on National Road 445 near Grigny, an important suburban link. National security police (CRS) had to be sent in, as well as the Anti-Crime Brigade (BAC), France's toughest cops. And consider, too, the organized attacks this fall on policemen, firemen, and other public security personnel. On September 19, two CRS officers were chased by threatening youths at the Tarterets housing project in Corbeil, Essonne. Ten days later, on September 29, a man described as "insane" opened fire on a CRS company at Clichy-la-Garenne, Hauts-de-Seine. On October 1, seven policemen were chased and wounded at Mureaux, a more distant suburb west of Paris. Similar incidents occurred, almost routinely, throughout the month of October.

More often than not, the CRS or police were not just attacked but ambushed. "One gets the feeling that war orders have been issued against the cops," wrote *Le Nouvel Observateur*, the liberal weekly, on November 1. Cyrille Brown, secretary general of the leftist CGT bus drivers union, insisted: "What we have now are organized attacks." Michel Thooris, a spokesman for Action Police, a conservative police union, expressed the view that "this is not just a matter of angry unemployed youths who get violent at times," but "something carefully planned."

The public-housing projects that gradually bur-

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AP Photo/Christian Hartmann

A torched bus in Le Blanc-Mesnil, north of Paris, October 27, 2006

geoned around most French cities in the second half of the 20th century now serve as strongholds and training grounds for these violent gangs. After the incident on National Road 455, the stone-throwers were rolled back into the neighboring projects, but there was no further pursuit. One police source confided to *Le Monde* that security forces were actually "discouraged" from making incursions into those neighborhoods, except on rare occasions. The source went on: "It is a terrible mistake. Since we avoid going inside, where *they* are, they attack us outside, where *we* are."

Most French suburban public housing was originally designed by talented architects, and could have developed into pleasant neighborhoods. Mass immigration had an adverse effect on them, however, and turned them into either North African or black African ghettoes (an estimated 15 percent of the overall French population—one quarter of the population under 20—is now non-European and non-Judeo-Christian). Ethnic criminal gangs took over, as often happens under such circumstances: They forced the last native French or European inhabitants out, and made it increasingly difficult for the police to enter and monitor the projects. Later, fundamentalist Islamic brotherhoods asserted themselves in the projects, or cités, as they are called.

A complex relationship seems to have arisen between these two power centers. On the one hand, the fundamentalists intended to protect the immigrant community against everything the gangs stood for: drugs, alcohol, sexual promiscuity, easy money from crime. On the other hand, they derived benefits from the ethnic enclave status the gangs had secured. A tacit or not so tacit agreement was reached: The brotherhood would ignore, and at times condone as "holy war," the activities of the gangs outside the neighborhood; the gangs would help the brotherhoods to impose Islamic law on the inside.

There was a further division of labor: When the gangs would engage in inordinate violence against the police or non-Muslim communities, the brotherhoods would act as "wise men" available to mediate between the government and the gangs and to help restore law and order—on their own terms. According to many experts, this is precisely what happened last year, when the conservative minister of the interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, talked of "thoroughly cleansing" *("passer au Kärcher")* the eight hundred or so no-go zones that had cropped up all over urban France. Neither the gangs nor the fundamentalists liked that prospect. The gangs masterminded unprecedented "youth riots"; the fundamentalists then restored civil peace, and won as a reward de facto pardon for most rioters, a "less provocative" police presence in the suburbs, i.e., no "cleansing," more privileges for Islam as "France's second and most quickly growing religion," and recognition for themselves as national leaders. As Michel Thooris put it in an interview with

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L'Est Républicain, an influential newspaper in eastern France: "Security is a state prerogative. Inasmuch as the national police fail to provide it, the imams are ready to usurp it."

The riots last year clearly ended as a victory for both the gangs and the fundamentalist imams. Why, then, are they being reenacted? One commonly heard explanation is that "the youths" want to "celebrate." Far more plausible is that the new wave of violence is an intervention in the coming national elections: the presidential election in April and May 2007 and then the parliamentary election of June. Oddly enough (or perhaps not so odd), the frontrunners, on both the right and the left, are champions of law and order: Sarkozy is poised to be the conservative contender; as for the Socialists, Ségolène Royal, the governor of Poitou-Charentes in western France, has just easily won the primary.

The daughter of a right-wing Catholic general, Royal aims to become France's Tony Blair and perhaps even, as the *Economist* suggested recently, France's Margaret Thatcher. She outdoes Sarkozy in many respects: She wants to bring back discipline to schools, send criminal teenagers to boot camps, and reinstate the draft, for both boys and girls, in order to teach them "republican and patriotic values." And that makes her quite popular among liberal and conservative voters alike. Clearly, each of these candidates is seen as a major threat by the ethnic powers that be. It would be safer to destabilize them now. Among conservatives, both President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin remain more eager than Sarkozy to show "understanding" for "the youths." Among Socialists, Royal's chief rivals—Dominique Strauss-Kahn and Laurent Fabius—are likewise posturing as more tolerant.

Some analysts claim that this urban violence, both last year's and this year's, is not ethnic but rather a matter of social class. There are, indeed, native French youths among the rioters: According to the Ministry of the Interior and other government sources, 16 percent of the young rioters brought to court last year appear to be the offspring of French-born parents. Conversely, the victims of urban violence are as likely to belong to ethnic or religious minorities as are those who engage in it. Mama Galledou is Senegalese. The passengers who, unlike her, managed to escape from the burning buses, are predominantly immigrants or the French-born children of immigrants.

A further argument for a social rather than ethnic or religious interpretation of the present crisis is that one finds much support for the rioters among the predominantly white and non-Muslim parties of the far left: the two Trotskyite parties, what is left of the old Communist party, and the Greens. Even among the far right activists—for whom hatred of America, Israel, and the "free-market European Union" tends to outweigh any other consideration—there is support for the gangs.

Indeed, there are intellectuals on the left and right who relish the prospect of a new French Revolution, and welcome the suburban rioters as its spearhead. Nothing is more revealing, in this respect, than the success of a feverish political novel, *Supplément au roman national* (A Sequel to the National Narrative), by 28-year-old author Jean-Éric Boulin. Published two months ago, it forecasts a "social and racial" revolution in France in 2007. First a wave of suicide bombings in Paris. Then martial law. Then, finally, the great rebellion of the French poor: the native underclass, the Arabs, and the blacks, who unite under the green flag of Islam and the tricolor of France and march on Paris—as a sort of Commune in reverse. Boulin gallantly supports such an outcome.

One can make too much of this line of argument, however. Even if some rioters are of native French stock, the fact is that most of them are not. And even in Boulin's hallucinatory novel, Arabs and blacks outnumber the native French in the revolutionary coalition—an implicit admission that the present violence is primarily ethnic.

Still, it would be wise not to write off entirely the possibility of a green-red alliance. There is a historical precedent in the spread of Islam itself, in the 7th century. It is well known that the newly founded religious empire from Arabia overran in less than two decades the two mightiest powers of the time, the Christian Byzantine Empire and the Mazdean Persian Empire. What is less well known is that the Arab expansion coincided, in both places, with a deep ethnic, religious, and social crisis. In fact, the Arabs didn't outright conquer Palestine, Syria, Anatolia, Egypt, North Africa, Iraq, and the Iranian plateau. They struck alliances with the local rebels: the Copts and the Syriacs, the Nestorians and the Donatists, the Jews and the Mardakites, with those who spoke neither Greek nor Persian and shared neither the beliefs of the basileus nor those of the shah. Even the green flag of Islam was borrowed from non-Arabs: It was originally the symbol of rebellion in Byzantium, the equivalent in its day of the red flag in ours.

Can history repeat itself, and fundamentalist Islam subdue Europe in the 21st century with the help of European extremists? Will the green flag and the red flag wave side by side? Buses are burning in France and nobody, so far, seems to know how to stop that. ♦

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Corbis / Bob Krist

Fourth Century monastery at Geghard

At History's Crossroads

The making of the Armenian nation BY CHRISTOPHER J. WALKER

In Xenophon's *Anabasis*—"The March Up-Country"—there is a description of the Armenian people. We learn of the clans and their chiefs. We are also introduced to the popular custom of drinking beer through a straw. Xenophon was writing in 401 B.C.

Today you can take a plane to Yerevan, capital of the Republic of Armenia, not so far from the region that Xenophon was describing, and you will meet the descendants of those whose lives were drawn by the ancient writer. You'll learn that Armenians have lived there continuously, rising to establish great dynasties, falling to subsistence, exile, or mass death, before becoming post-Soviet citizens. In this fascinating and important book, Razmik Panossian traces the connections across the centuries from the experience of the past to the reality of the present. He delineates the course of the roots that have fed the stems, leaves, and flowers visible today.

Modern Armenia is a child of World War I. When the great empires of Europe and Asia collapsed in 1917-18, having hammered each other prostrate in warfare, a host of nation-states took their place. One of these was Armenia, which emerged as sovereign in May 1918—more than a year after Czar Nicholas II's abdication had set in train the process towards the state's independence.

The Armenians
From Kings and Priests To Merchants and Commissars
by Razmik Panossian
Columbia, 442 pp., $40

In a sense, though, Armenia's independence had been maturing for centuries, and that course is charted here. We learn how the new nation took shape: the processes of development, differentiation, learning, understanding, and self-knowledge that stirred the spirit of the people. Armenia, like other national cultures that developed into states, had been clogged for centuries by the dark weeds and oppressive mud of other people's empires, before it found a current with which to swim to the clear surface.

Until World War I, Armenia was divided between the empires of Turkey and Russia. Its crises with its empires came relatively late. The people were regimented and treated with disdain by their rulers, but there was no emergency until the late 19th century. By this time the population was on the way to emancipation and self-knowledge, and had outgrown the restrictive bureaucracies that governed them. A

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desire to loosen the bonds of empire was a natural corollary.

As Panossian informs us, a Catholic Armenian order of monks based in Venice, known as the Mechitarists, was instrumental in pushing forward much of the process of emancipation. From the early 18th century, members of this order acted in a startlingly modern and critical fashion, ably separating Catholic concerns from matters connected with Armenian history and education. They retrieved the history and language of the Armenians, collecting texts, sifting facts, and building up a clear picture of the nation.

The people in the homeland were fortunate here, for the order was quite possibly acting heretically. Compare the situation with Catholic Hapsburg influence on the Czech nation. Compare the situation with that of the Czechs, whose language and identity were being abolished by agents of God and Emperor. The Jesuit Antonin Konias boasted of burning 60,000 books in the Czech language, including the Czech Bible. (The true figure is closer to 30,000—still huge.) Henceforth, Latin, and then a bastardized form of German, were imposed on the Czechs. Lands were confiscated and leading families were compelled to leave. The peasantry, denied their reformed faith and resenting the imposition of Catholicism, largely relapsed into paganism. Only later, through the agency of antiquarians and historians of language, did they start to relearn their own language and rediscover their true identity—not as Jesuit-driven Hapsburgers, but as the Czech nation.

The perils that the Czechs had endured under the Hapsburgs attended Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1894-96, then those in Russia in 1903-05, and most seriously in Ottoman Turkey in 1915-16, when the Armenian population from the Aegean coast to the Russian border was driven out or exterminated in a totality and cruelty so vast as to make the charge of genocide a valid one. (Anyone who questions the reality of the Armenian genocide should read U.S. consul Leslie Davis's dispatches from Kharput.) Is there a thread running through empires, which tends to make them, sooner or later, attack or destroy their own subject peoples?

Razmik Panossian writes at length on the origin and nature of nationalism, though one regrets his omission of the views of Hans Kohn, an able and enlightened writer on the topic. Panossian discusses the difference between the constructivists (who believed that national identity is a construct) and the primordialists (who believe it was always there, waiting to be discovered). From the facts he presents, and from his use of the word "retrieve" in the context of Armenian national identity, it would seem that he prefers a qualified version of the primordialists—which certainly makes most sense in the light of historical facts.

The process of becoming a modern and aware member of a national group—a nation in the modern sense—seems best summed up in T. S. Eliot's words: *To recover what has been lost / And found and lost again and again.* Intense theories about the construction of nationality appear rather less smart and modern when one recalls that the Armenian writer Grigor Tatevatsi, writing almost exactly 600 years ago, declared that "a nation is divided from another nation by region, by language, and by canon law." His text was reprinted in Constantinople in 1729. Maybe some of the disputes about modern nationalism amount to little more than a barrowful of medieval scholasticism.

In the light of the facts of rule by empires, any general study of the topic should consist less in theorizing about the development of national identity than in exploring the dynamics within empires that lead them to oppress and crush national communities. In other words, we should study the empires more than the subject nationalities, since the problem lies with them. The question to answer is: Why are empires such a uniquely bad way of organizing human society? Why, in their collectivity and tendency towards monopoly, do they end up looking like the Soviet Union of about 1974?

It is odd that some new version of empire is championed as the way forward today by thinkers such as Philip Bobbitt and Robert Cooper. And it is hard to see how nations like Armenia might fit into such a scheme, divided as the country was until 1918 between two empires, each, to a greater or lesser extent, destructive. Poland was not better off divided among three empires than as a unitary state. There was a farcical situation in New Caledonia, the Pacific territory over which, in colonial times, Britain and France perpetually quarreled. This led to the requirement that the native people speak French one day, and English the next.

Examples spring to mind from the Baltic countries. In Lithuania, in 1861, the czarist governor Muraviev had said he looked forward to a time 40 years hence when there would be no trace of Lithuania or Lithuanians. The czarist authorities actually dynamited Catholic churches in Lithuania. The Lithuanian language was forbidden. Anyone caught even coming out of church with a Lithuanian prayer book was punished. In Estonia and Latvia, the native people sought freedom from both Germans and Russians, but the Russian paternalistic fanatic Pobiedonostsev, a modern Grand Inquisitor representing the power of extreme orthodoxy, declared that no czar possessed the power to diminish his own authority!

What these few examples show is that nationalism—local pride—is often little more than a common-sense response to the actions of empires: an expression of ordinary local folk against an Orwellian nightmare of giganticism; a struggle to retain a human face, an identity grounded in town or neighborhood, when confronted by a governmental monster grinding towards political monopoly. We saw this in the last months of the Soviet empire (with Lithuania again in the forefront), and we have been witnessing it in the steady maintenance of Tibetan nationalism against the bullying nastiness of the Chinese empire. The British in Ireland also edged into imperial terrorism, by acts of collective

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punishment and, from 1831, by compelling children to speak English, forcing a cruel contraption into the mouths of kids unable or unwilling to do so.

Panossian's book is a warning against the return of empires, and a plea for localism. Few people in the world have endured more from the lack of localism, and from the intrusion of grandiose, secretive political conglomerates, than the Armenians. They, and other small nations, look for a world order, perhaps untidy, of many voices. Their history is an argument against big government. We are reminded that the Armenian people have always worked hard, and been self-supporting, and that from that work ethic has come a devotion to their heritage.

Even the merchants, active across the world in late medieval and early modern times, favored patriotic activities, building churches and keeping in mind the historical, ecclesiastical, and cultural legacy of their people, especially their unique alphabet. Financial success only denationalized some of those in the Ottoman capital. The record of the generous and patriotic Armenian capitalist extends to the present day.

Panossian's study of the background to modern Armenia has a further value. He informs us of the activities of the Indian Armenians, who pioneered Armenian journalism in the 1770s and contributed a major history of the homeland; this was when the monks in Venice were working hardest. Their enterprise had been made possible by the privileged position that Armenian merchants had been granted in Iran in 1604. Local educational establishments were also set up in the Caucasus. Enterprising and patriotic Armenians established an academy in Moscow in 1815.

All these activities predated the arrival of American missionaries, and Panossian proves the falsity of a malign theory about the Armenians, proposed by Elie Kedourie and repeated by Maurice Cowling, that by accepting modernization from U.S. missionaries (who first arrived in 1829), the Armenians prepared for their own disasters. The introduction of Western values into an Eastern society, so the theory goes, created an impossible marriage, and the Eastern society was driven to murder.

Mount Ararat

Atlantide Phototravel / Corbis / Guido Cozzi

The Ottoman campaigns of extreme violence of 1894-06 and of 1915-16 were, in effect, a lengthy Armenian suicide. (Armenians in the Russian empire lie outside this curious metaphysic.) Besides being constructed around a spineless concept of political responsibility, the theory ignores the point that development came from many more directions, and at an earlier date, than just from American missionaries. Change was more nuanced, and the Turks themselves had been moving towards some modernization: scientific education, printing, and so forth. The ruling elite was not terminally reactionary. So this theory is disproved by historical facts, and cannot stand up by reason of its scant regard for basic knowledge.

Two points need more extensive treatment than what Panossian offers us. The presence of the Kurds in historic Armenia requires explanation: Kurdish tribes, as Sunni Muslims, were introduced into western Armenia by the Turkish sultan, following his victory over the Persians at the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514. Their purpose was to guard the frontier against the Shiite nation. This mandate lapsed with a treaty in 1639, but the Armenians were thereafter compelled to share their land with a privileged ethnicity, which was re-privileged in 1891 when the sultan, sensing a spirit of Kurdish revolt, nipped it in the bud by creating loyal Kurdish regiments, turning their threats towards the Armenians. A brilliant and cynical imperial ruse.

The book could also benefit from a stronger awareness of the international political situation. Though the Armenian nation has never been large, the homeland is located on a pivotal part of the earth's surface, which has led to an excessive interest in Armenia by outside powers that do not share the usual Armenian characteristics of culture and self-limitation.

There is, perhaps, a third point: that the author himself shows some of the partisanship that has divided the worldwide Armenian community for almost 90 years. His fondness for the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which has shown genuine and dedicated service and activity, leads him to downplay the legacy of the scholarly and cautious Ramkavar party: less noisy, more conservative, but with a deep understanding of Armenia's history, culture, and options.

A word about this book's physical appearance. Columbia University Press has done a fine job in producing a volume that, besides making public a valuable text, is easily usable and attractive. The design of the book and its evocative jacket owe something to Shaker art, and something to the English Arts and Crafts movement—a classic of book-making, an item for anyone who values fine books. ♦

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America's Bird

The turkey, in love and war.

BY EMILY YOFFE

Corbis / David Muench

Books about how a particular foodstuff explains our world have become a publishing staple. There are volumes on salt, cod (although not salt cod), potato, and rum, among others. Now food historian Andrew F. Smith has contributed *The Turkey: An American Story*. Smith wisely does not try to make the case that the turkey is the central actor in American history. Despite the seeming blandness of his topic, he has produced not a turkey—he explains that the term of opprobrium comes from unfair assumptions about turkeys' lack of intelligence—but a surprisingly palatable volume on our native fowl and how it became a symbol of America's providence (if not gluttony).

The Turkey
An American Story
by Andrew F. Smith
Illinois, 264 pp., $29.95

The book is stuffed (all right, I'll stop) with so much turkey information—from their natural history, to their commercial history, to their role in history—that quoting from it extensively at the Thanksgiving table could make you the Ken Jennings of the feast. Or make your fellow revelers want to shove a drumstick down your throat. Of course, Smith dismantles the myth of the first Thanksgiving. It's true that Pilgrim Edward Winslow wrote a letter in 1621 describing how the governor of the colony "sent four men on fowling," after which there was a lengthy feast attended by Massasoit and his men. But it was not a day of thanksgiving as the pilgrims would have understood it, which were religious commemorations observed in church. And for the next two centuries, little was made of Winslow's celebration.

It was the two-decade campaign begun in 1846 by the writer and editor Sarah Josepha Hale (author of "Mary Had a Little Lamb") that was the driving force behind this holiday. Her campaign took on particular urgency as the nation headed toward civil war; Hale hoped a national day of thanks would help prevent the union's dissolution. Undeterred by the war, Hale finally succeeded when, in 1863, Abraham Lincoln declared the last Thursday in November a national day of thanks. It wasn't until after the Civil War that the mythology about Thanksgiving and the Pilgrims came into being, spawning a million elementary school reenactment pageants. Smith describes how this holiday—even if it rests on shaky history—has been a portal through which successive decades of immigrants have learned to celebrate their Americanness.

Smith also clarifies the story about Benjamin Franklin campaigning for the turkey, not the bald eagle, to be the national bird. The controversy was over the design of the official seal of the United States. Franklin and Thomas Jefferson came up with a depiction of Moses crossing the Red Sea. When the image of the eagle was chosen instead, Franklin wrote a letter to his daughter lamenting that, as long as a bird was to become our symbol, he would have preferred the turkey, "in comparison a much more respectable Bird, and withal a true original Native of America."

Turkeys and Muscovy duck were the only fowl domesticated by the native people of the Americas in pre-Columbian times. The turkey was quickly embraced by European explorers who brought the birds back with them as early as the 1520s. Turkey quickly became an important Old World food; during the Renaissance a forerunner of the turducken was served at feasts. By the 19th century, Charles Dickens, in *A Christmas Carol*, enshrined turkey as the centerpiece of the Christmas meal. This transcontinental turkey traffic resulted in the most popular turkey breed in the United States in the 19th century, the American Bronze, which was a cross between domesticated turkeys brought back to America from Europe, and then mated with wild birds.

When Europeans first arrived on this continent, it was covered with wild turkeys. Smith writes that the colonists delighted that they didn't have to tend or raise these birds, but

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they were readily available.

"Here are likewise aboundance of Turkies often killed in the Woods, farre greater than our English Turkies, and exceeding fat, sweet, and fleshy," wrote the Massachusetts Bay Colony minister Thomas Wentworth Higginson in 1630.

Smith says that one of the biggest admirers of our native bird was the immigrant John James Audubon, whose *Birds of America* opening plate is of the wild turkey. Smith quotes Audubon's wonderful descriptions of turkey courtship, with the males strutting and puffing until the female "suddenly opens her wings, throws herself towards him, as if to put a stop to his idle delay, lays herself down, and receives his dilatory caresses." Audubon also described how, when the clutch of about a dozen eggs hatched, the mother would walk along with her brood under the tender cover of her wings.

Like another abundant species, the buffalo, wild turkeys were so prodigiously hunted, and their habitat so widely destroyed, that their population began plunging almost immediately after European settlement. By the 1880s, there were predictions that the wild turkey would soon join the dodo. But 20th-century efforts have saved the wild bird, and it is now estimated that seven million turkeys roam the continental United States. (I can attest to their comeback, having seen a flock in the Maine woods this summer, and one in Washington's Rock Creek Park this fall.)

But when Smith describes the modern commercial history of the domesticated turkey, one wonders if the birds don't sometimes wish they had just disappeared. The bird that is the focus of our modern feast is a grotesque that defies the principles of natural selection. By the 1930s, in response to consumer desires, breeders began producing crosses that had mountainous flesh on their breasts. One of these new breeds was even named "Bronze Mae West." By the 1950s, these broad-breasted turkeys had become the commercial standard. But they were so out of proportion that they could barely stand, and were completely unable to mate. They exclusively reproduce through artificial insemination—although Smith does not say if the deed is done with a turkey baster. The image of these creatures seems like a warning to Americans who consume them; does that fate await us if we get ever more corpulent?

Smith vividly describes the short, unhappy life of the commercial bird. Within days of hatching it is debeaked, desnooded, and de-toed—to curb their ability to injure each other under conditions of "intense confinement." The birds are raised in groups of up to 10,000 in windowless barns that are constantly lit to encourage the birds to eat. About four months later, Smith writes, they are "shackled upside down on an assembly line; then the turkeys are stunned by submerging their heads and necks in a bath of electrified water."

You can only read this chapter with the thought that maybe this is the year to try Tofurkey. But the trends are not going the turkeys' way. In 1970, per capita turkey consumption was 8.1 pounds; by 2004 it was 17.4. And by the end of the evening this November 23rd, many of us will feel that we have eaten our annual allotment in a single meal. ♦

AuH_2O in '64

How the Keystone GOPs changed the Republican party. **BY NEAL B. FREEMAN**

There's much to like about J. William Middendorf II's new book. First, of course, is the title—*A Glorious Disaster*—which is dead on and may finally help to strip away the Velcro long stuck between the name "Goldwater" and the noun "debacle." Then there's the author, Bill Middendorf, who bolts into politics with typical businessman swagger and, atypically, stays to create his own space, develop survival skills, and do much good. And finally, there's the candidate, Barry Morris Goldwater, without whom there would have been no campaign and no movement and maybe no magazine quite like this one.

A Glorious Disaster
Barry Goldwater's Presidential Campaign and the Origins of the Conservative Movement
by J. William Middendorf II
Basic Books, 290 pp., $26.95

Glorious is the memoir of a working executive, not a philosopher-king. Arrived on the political scene from early success on Wall Street, Middendorf already knew what he believed—he was a Goldwater Republican—and he concentrated his considerable energies on the political process and how it worked. With no need for ideological infusions from the policy wonks, he was free to focus on operational details: the governing regs, the people who could get things done, the sources of funds and the fine art of campaign bill-paying. He became an expert in political money, which saved him a place at every meeting he chose to attend. And he became that most feared of all meeting-attenders: the note-taker. The reader benefits here from Middendorf's encyclopedic files. The subjects of those files benefit only intermittently, which adds seasoning to this most unusual campaign book.

It seems almost inevitable that Middendorf would become a close associate and warm admirer of the Draft Goldwater Committee leader, F. Clifton White. One of the few professional

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Republican National Convention, San Francisco

Time Life Pictures / John Dominis

politicians of his era—someone, that is, who devoted his full working life to the practice of campaign management—Clif White was a man of schedules and timetables, agendas and reviews. Wise enough to know that he could never impose lasting order on the chaos of politics, White was still determined to control as much of the process as he possibly could.

Middendorf felt a sense of order, comfort, and shared purpose. Along with his mentor Jeremiah Milbank Jr., he signed on with White to be the money men for the Draft Committee. (Among the other key figures were *National Review* publisher William Rusher, who set the ideological compass for the group, and John Ashbrook, a young congressman who emboldened and energized the effort. Ashbrook, no son of 1994, seemed to harden in his views once he was elected and moved inside the Beltway.)

The story of how Clif White's crew drafted Goldwater and took over the GOP has been told elsewhere, including in White's own memoir, *Suite 3505.* The story of the "first genuine draft" is a great yarn, and not just for lovers of the political yarn. What Middendorf brings to the grand old party is those damn notes. He remembers who said what, and when, and then how they tried to tidy up the after-action reports. As a storyteller he's not going to make anybody forget Alexandre Dumas, but for political junkies, there's a fix waiting here.

I never knew, or had forgotten, that J. Edgar Hoover, on LBJ's orders, was bugging Goldwater headquarters. Or that the CIA man running traps on the Goldwater staff was our old friend E. Howard Hunt. Or that brand-name pols really thought that the selection of William Miller as the vice presidential nominee might lock up the electoral votes of New York. Middendorf is particularly good on the ouster of the Draft Goldwater crew—White and company, as well as William F. Buckley Jr. and the dreaded "intellectuals"—just as Goldwater secured the GOP nomination.

Middendorf, by then the indispensable fundraiser, was the only Clif White man to survive the purge, and he provides a peer's-eye view of the incoming "Arizona mafia." The just-nominated Goldwater, with his political life flashing before his eyes, decided to bring in three old friends from home—Arizona lawyers Denison Kitchel, Dean Burch, and Richard Kleindienst—to run his general-election campaign. He might as well have brought in Larry, Curly, and Moe. None of the three had any experience in national politics, and a campaign against an incumbent president was not the best place to start.

By Labor Day—in those days the traditional start of the campaign—it was all over but the shouting. Historians would later note, of course, that it was precisely the shouting that was much the best part of the campaign. Barry traveled to terminal sun colonies and informed oxygen-gulping oldsters that Social Security ought to be voluntary. He went to Tennessee and told the rent-seekers packed in around the federal trough that the Tennessee Valley Authority was a waste of public money. He reminded effete Eastern audiences that an efficient way to uncover North Vietnamese trails was to tactical-nuke 'em.

Not everybody found the candor refreshing. When Barry, in West Virginia, launched an attack on the War on Poverty, there was an eerie quiet as the audience searched his remarks for subsurface meaning. (My lingering campaign image is of a mid-sized cutter headed through rough seas toward a looming iceberg. On the bridge the tension is palpable. A young officer breaks the strained silence, shouting into the gale, "Skip, let's see what this baby can do." The captain replies, "Good thinking, lieutenant," and guns the engine full forward.)

Middendorf is undoubtedly correct

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when he laments the departure of White's battle-hardened team and the takeover by Barry's well-meaning rookies. Clif White *would* have run a better campaign and the race *would* have been closer. But Goldwater would have lost even so, and the ultimate victory of conservatism might possibly have been compromised, the paradigmatic character of the campaign somehow sacrificed. The residual value of the campaign—the themes developed, the troops bloodied, the lists compiled, the organizations framed—redeems Barry's decision to do it his way. All choice, no echo. The campaign was a lab lesson in gratification deferred, or as George Will has written: "We . . . who voted for him in 1964 believe he won, it just took 16 years to count the votes."

While Middendorf gives only brief attention to matters of policy and program, he is careful not to confuse the politics of Barry Goldwater with those of Brent Bozell. Goldwater, it will be remembered, was propelled to leadership of the nascent "movement" after publication of his huge bestseller, *The Conscience of a Conservative*. Bozell, who had ghosted the book, was a brilliant lawyer and a skilled ideologist (and yes, the father of the magisterial media-basher of the same name). A political intimate of the fusionist Frank Meyer, Bozell had woven strands of Milton Friedman's free-market programs in with Russell Kirk's traditionalist philosophy to produce a seemingly seamlesss text. Bozell was also a master of chiliastic prose. The book was a call to arms, and the first generation of movement types fled the plow for the armory. (Partial disclosure: I managed Bozell's Maryland congressional campaign to a brilliant second-place finish.)

Goldwater evinced mixed emotions about the book. He was grateful for its success, of course, but always a bit awkward in accepting praise for work not really his own. Early on he adopted the formulation that Bozell had been the "guiding hand" in preparation of the book, and over the years, Goldwater made little effort to hold Bozell close to the inner circle. Late in his life, when we had reconnected as colleagues on a corporate board, I asked Goldwater for his final reckoning on *Conscience*. The essential Barry responded, "Well, I read the book. I even agreed with parts of it."

What, then, were Goldwater's politics, if not elegantly Bozellian? Perhaps they can best be described as western ornery. Goldwater would have been a charter member of the Leave Us Alone coalition—if he had believed in coalitions. Born only a few years after the birth of his beloved Arizona, he shared the frontiersman's sleepless wariness, the bone-deep distrust of large, remote, and power-grabbing governments. His first reaction to almost any initiative on the fuzzy border of constitutional authority would have been—"It's none of the government's damn business."

It's a measure of how far we have come that there is today in Congress perhaps only a single heir to Goldwater's minimalism—Ron Paul of Texas—and that he is regarded within his own Republican caucus as somewhere between a curiosity and a kook. It is noteworthy as well that the man who inherited Goldwater's Senate seat, John McCain, has made his mark in politics by abridging speech freedoms in the name of campaign finance reform. Which seems to beg this question: Is there still room in the movement for a smaller-the-better-government conservative, a national modesty conservative? Is there still room for Barry Goldwater? ♦

High Noon

The clash of Old and New Hollywood, Part Four.

BY BRIAN C. ANDERSON

This year's Oscars reinforced for many Americans the view of Hollywood as the land of obdurate limousine liberalism. Four of the five best picture nominees were self-consciously "progressive" films: *Good Night, and Good Luck* (on fighting McCarthyism); eventual winner *Crash* (on how everyone is racist); *Munich* (on how fighting terror militarily just unleashes greater terror); and *Brokeback Mountain* (celebrating gay cowboys in love). Off screen, of course, Hollywood's elite has campaigned nonstop against the Iraq War and the Bush administration.

Yet Hollywood hasn't always been a left-wing encampment, as Scott Eyman's recent, superb biography of Louis B. Mayer showed (*Lion of Hollywood: The Life and Legend of Louis B. Mayer*). The mogul's mogul and a lifelong Republican, Mayer reigned over Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM)—the biggest and best of the studios that built Hollywood—from its inception in 1924 until a boardroom coup forced him out in 1951. Under his direction, MGM released a steady stream of hit movies, making stars out of Clark Gable, Katharine Hepburn, and many others, and helping to create Hollywood's Golden Age of the 1930s and '40s, when as much as two-thirds of the U.S. population went to the movies weekly.

Central to MGM's success, Mayer believed, was "clean, wholesome entertainment." "Our pictures," he observed, "must show religion—love of flag and home—respect for father and mother. There are too many who look at these themes as 'unsophisticated' and lacking the 'realism' of actual life." At a time when the movies had unmatched influence over the American imagination, Mayer's MGM celebrated traditional veri-

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ties. The other big studios followed its lead.

Earlier biographies saddled Mayer with the reputation of being "the devil incarnate," as Helen Hayes described him. Eyman doesn't gloss over Mayer's dark side: the thirst for vengeance, the will to power, the narcissism. But he credits Mayer's generosity, his "fervent love affair with America," and his uncanny business sense, too. Born Lazar Meir to a Jewish family in the Ukraine in the 1880s, Mayer lived the American Dream. The Mayers immigrated in the early 1890s to Saint John, New Brunswick, where young Louis worked for his father's scrap-metal business and received a derisory formal education. Though diminutive, Mayer fearlessly dove deep into the icy Bay of Fundy, seeking scraps. He later attributed his intimidating strength—occasionally unleashed on mulish filmmakers—to this harsh experience. Working as a junk dealer also made him entrepreneurial. "Out of this crucible was Louis B. Mayer formed," writes Eyman.

The movies came to Saint John in 1897, entrancing Mayer, who burned to escape. Borrowing and striving, escape he did, to Haverhill, Massachusetts, where he opened his first movie theater in 1907, proclaiming its devotion to "high-class films." The first movie he screened, *The Passion Play*, was a smash, and Haverhill residents got used to seeing long lines snake up to the theater doors. Soon Mayer had six movie houses, each with its own theme: one ran westerns, another romances, and so on. Shortly after becoming an American citizen, Mayer struck gold by buying the New England rights to D.W. Griffith's technologically innovative (and racist) 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*. In 1918, wanting to make movies rather than show them, Mayer relocated to Los Angeles, forming Louis B. Mayer Productions. A few years later, theater owner Marcus Loew bought the successful firm and folded it into the new MGM, with Mayer appointed master of the show.

Mayer knew just what the public wanted. If he liked a screenplay, he'd exclaim: "It hit me here"—and thump his stomach. "If a story makes me cry, I know it's good. . . . I'm a sucker for humanity." Mayer had final say in what movies MGM made, and what made it into those movies. But while he guaranteed MGM movies' wholesome values, he shrewdly delegated key responsibilities to gifted deputies like the producer Irving Thalberg. More than any rival studio, MGM revolved around the "star." "A star is made," Mayer explained, "carefully and cold-bloodedly built up from nothing." Everyman Spencer Tracy, vulnerable Judy Garland, the "shopgirl heat" of Joan Crawford (as Eyman has it)—all were MGM personas. Actors were salaried employees under long-term contracts, not free agents. Directors sometimes arrived after script and casting were finished. Working at MGM meant that you were on call six days a week, 40 weeks a year, and had zero say in what movies you did. And the studios owned the theaters, which meant that big players like MGM could freeze out independent producers and run their own movies on their own terms; disgruntled talent had nowhere else to turn.

By the mid-1930s, MGM stood at the apex of this system. At its peak, the studio employed 6,000 and sprawled across 167 acres, with sets that ranged from a Victorian street to a tangled jungle. It had its own barber shop, round-the-clock eatery, police force, and zoo (home to the lion that roared before every MGM production). Mayer may have demanded morality onscreen, but the MGM lot was more relaxed. Writers packed the studio opium den; a black man known as Slickum supplied hookers. Nor was Mayer himself—by 1937, the highest-paid salaried worker in America, worth around $1.3 million a year before taxes—all that upright in his personal life. He divorced his long-suffering wife, Margaret Shenberg, in 1944 (later remarrying) and used his authority to bed aspiring starlets. But as Eyman notes, he also inspired fierce loyalty: "To work at MGM in these years was to have a sense of security unparalleled in the movie industry—many employees were like enlightened Moonies, spouting a cult of MGM."

And the movies! *A Night at the Opera*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *The Human Comedy*—on and on the list goes. MGM's Golden Age reflected the energy and optimism of the American democracy that had lifted a poor Ukrainian Jew from peddling scrap to the pinnacles of wealth and power. "It was proper to tell stories of success and its importance, so others could achieve what he had achieved," says Eyman. But the studio's sophisticated classics could also carry a darker European subtext. A Greta Garbo tragedy like *Camille*, directed by George Cukor (the son of first-generation Hungarian immigrants), is as much Old World as New in sensibility. You often hear about American cultural imperialism, says the French writer André Glucksmann, but in Golden Age Hollywood, Europe "'colonized' the imagination of the New World."

Two factors helped bring down MGM and the studio system. First, the 1948 Supreme Court antitrust decision in *U.S.* v. *Paramount et al.* strong-armed the studios into giving up their theaters, weakening the moguls and shifting power to actors, independent filmmakers, and the agents who represented them. Then came television. In 1947, 136,000 sets illuminated American living rooms; a year later, 700,000. As audiences started staying home to watch the tube, MGM films began losing money. And Mayer was out, victim of a changing industry. He wandered about, seemingly forgotten, until his death in 1957. His funeral was like that of a head of state, with former President Herbert Hoover among the honorary pallbearers and all of Hollywood's glitterati in attendance. Spencer Tracy's eulogy evoked the end of an age:

> The story he wanted to tell was the story of America—the land for which he had an almost furious love, born of gratitude—and of contrast with the hatred in the dark land of boyhood across the seas. . . . The shining epoch of the industry passes with him.

The change was gradual, but by the 1960s the old moguls and the system

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Time & Life Pictures / Getty / Walter Sanders

Louis B. Mayer and friends, 1943

they ruled were gone. Like so many American institutions, Hollywood was radicalized in the 1960s and '70s, and a new filmmaker elite emerged whose worldview—secular, anticapitalist, celebrating sexual liberation—was at odds with the bourgeois ethos that Mayer so loved. Enlightening, not entertaining, became Hollywood's mission. No movie captured the transvaluation of cinematic values more perfectly than Dennis Hopper's 1969 biker epic *Easy Rider*, "one of the worst acclaimed films ever made in America," in the words of David Thomson in *The Whole Equation: A History of Hollywood*. Its vision of America as corrupt to its core struck a chord with younger viewers, and it earned more than $160 million in today's dollars and two Oscar nominations.

Wowed by *Easy Rider*'s box office, the industry rushed to install younger left-of-center executives who could replicate its connection with alienated youth. In the decade after *Easy Rider*, Hollywood films like Paul Mazursky's *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* and Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H** questioned nearly every aspect of American life. Heroes disappeared, and the western, once a Hollywood mainstay, became the subject of mockery. Big business was the bad guy. Religious characters appeared in a harshly negative light, if at all. Explicit sex, violence, coarse language, and nihilistic storylines characterized Hollywood's product. New Hollywood exactly inverted Mayer's filmmaking philosophy.

Thomson looks back fondly on this period, *Easy Rider* notwithstanding: "I believe that there was a narrow window (from about 1967 to about 1975) in which the prospect of grown-up American cinema . . . came into being." Yet while it's true that some of the nervy films produced during these years stand up, others seem more dated—even less "grown up"—30 years on than do MGM's older masterpieces. If you don't believe me, try sitting through Altman's meandering *Nashville*.

One thing's for sure: with some notable exceptions, New Hollywood never caught fire with the public. As the movies embraced the counterculture in the late sixties and early seventies, weekly attendence plummeted below 20 million, down from over 35 million just a few years before (television had siphoned the rest of the Golden Age's 90 million or so regular filmgoers). And despite a swelling U.S. population, weekly attendance wouldn't get close to 30 million again until the mid-1990s, when Hollywood began to downplay consciousness-raising and started entertaining again—and entertaining kids, especially. As Edward Jay Epstein explains in *The Big Picture: The New Logic of Money and Power in Hollywood*, the true genius of the industry's post-studio-system future was Walt Disney, a Midwesterner who never felt at home on the West Coast.

With Mickey Mouse in the twenties, Disney found an inexhaustible profit pool, argues Epstein: "children at play at home and around the world." Disney could tap this colossal market by licensing the animated characters from his movies to book publishers, toy manufacturers, and scores of other industries. And because his cartoon figures needed little verbal elaboration, they could also reach a global audience. Walk into a toy store or fast-food restaurant and see how quickly Hollywood has embraced Disney's model. Merchandizing tie-ins are omnipresent, ranging from action figures to video games. The global audience is now as vital as the American one, and gravitates toward special effects that downplay verbal complexity. The home video market, another source of

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licensing profits, is now larger than that of movie theaters, and will get larger still as more Americans lug home those wide-screen high-def TVs. Theater ticket sales now make up less than 15 percent of studio revenues.

One striking fact about many contemporary youth-targeted movies, which often lack New Hollywood's sophistication, is how they tend to hark back to the MGM era in their values. Drawing on age-old heroic archetypes, box office giants like *Spider-Man 2* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* focus on the struggle between good and evil, extol self-sacrifice and martial virtues, and come down on the side of Truth. Looking to younger audiences has made sense for today's movie business for another reason, in Epstein's view: Since the studios can't rely on automatic turnout in the theaters, they must generate a unique audience for every movie on its opening weekend. The chief means of doing this is massive television advertising, targeting the demographic most willing to get out of the house on weekends: kids, especially teens. The ad campaigns usually cost more than the studios' box office take—and actors get paid a lot more these days, driving production costs higher still—so licensing becomes even more essential to profitability.

So what about all the *Good Night, and Good Luck*s that Hollywood has been rolling out? They don't usually pack 'em in on opening night, and Edward R. Murrow doesn't lend himself to an action figure. How do such films get the green light? Epstein argues that Hollywood functions according to a social and political logic as well as an economic one: Elite filmmakers want to make money, but the desire for recognition from peers and critics is also important. To win a big award and cocktail party kudos, a "hard-hitting" film exposing Big Oil machinations will get you a lot farther than, say, *Finding Nemo*. The New Hollywood spirit survives, albeit diminished, in today's industry.

Yet the future promises a momentous shift, perhaps even—after the Golden Age, New Hollywood, and the Empire of Licensing—a fourth moviemaking era. Thanks to new technology, the cost of producing independent movies diminishes by the month, and the web provides a distribution network that doesn't require budget-busting ad campaigns. So we could soon see more of Thomson's "grown-up" cinema. And the politics of some of these movies may surprise. A small, vibrant moviemaking right is emerging, centered around the annual Liberty Film Festival, film mogul Philip Anschutz, and a growing group of conservative and libertarian screenwriters and documentarians. Instead of the right habitually reproving Hollywood, we might see a new cinema that artistically reflects—rather than crudely imposes—a different, nonliberal, worldview.

That would represent a big step forward in reclaiming popular culture from the left. ♦

Lifetime Achievement

One less vote for Pedro.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

In our day, the world's most famous filmmakers are brash Americans whose names are brands every bit as much as Nabisco is: Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Quentin Tarantino, Spike Lee, Martin Scorsese. Step back 40 years, though, and only one of the world's best-known directors even spoke English (that would be Alfred Hitchcock). Every other brand-name filmmaker lived far from America and made films in other languages: Federico Fellini and Michelangelo Antonioni in Italy, François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard in France, Ingmar Bergman in Sweden, Luis Buñuel in Spain, and Akira Kurosawa in Japan.

Volver
Directed by Pedro Almodóvar

The releases of their movies were considered major cultural events in this country. They were discussed with veneration, even when (maybe especially when) a new film proved to be something of a dud. They were hailed for their willingness to grapple with dark themes, existential dread, and the despair of the soulless bourgeoisie. Stanley Kauffman once said that Bergman should win the Nobel Prize for Literature, a notion seconded by John Simon.

Today, such a view of the pompously ponderous Bergman—with his ticking clocks representing the coming Doom—seems almost touchingly dated. It's a relic of an earlier time when people eager to embrace and champion the medium of film were always mistaking artsiness for art and pretension for profundity. The same is true of the critical attention garnered by Truffaut, whose delightfully breezy work today seems as substantial as cotton candy.

Their stature was due more to deep American cultural insecurity than it was to the artistic aspirations of the films in question. Surely, if you recognized the depth and moral seriousness of these works of art, you could transcend this country's broad-shouldered Babbitry and become a true citizen of the world. Susan Sontag took regular trips to Paris in order to be instructed on what to think. America's middlebrow film critics took regular trips to films made in Paris to be told what to feel.

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America's love affair with foreign film ended at some point in the mid-1980s, pretty much with the passing or obsolescence of the 1960s generation of directors who were once so famous. Efforts to create successor superstars—especially the egregious Lina Wertmüller, an Italian Eurocommunist who became the toast of New York for about a year until audiences figured out that films like *Swept Away* and *Seven Beauties* revealed Wertmüller was primarily an antifeminist misogynist—faltered. Now foreign film production functions best as a Hollywood farm team. Make a good or stylish or catchy movie abroad and you just might be asked to direct an action or horror picture starring Sarah Michelle Gellar.

There is one notable exception to this trend, one director remaining on the Continent whose name alone inspires rhapsodies, Oscar nominations, and critical ratings of 100 percent among American critics surveyed by the *rottentomatoes.com* website. He is Pedro Almodóvar, the bard of Madrid. So assured is he of his brand-name status that he now simply bills himself as "Almodóvar," and Pedro be damned. Though he began making movies in 1980, he became an international star only with the release of his screwball comedy *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* in 1988—and since then, he has made nine films and all of them have been released theatrically in the United States, the only international filmmaker of whom that can be said. In 2003, he won an Oscar for best screenplay for *Talk to Her*, and this year he won the same award at the Cannes Film Festival for *Volver*.

What accounts for Almodóvar's sterling reputation and standing during an era in which non-American films are in eclipse, not only here but also abroad? His films are vivid, teeming affairs—a feast of superbly photographed colors and textures, with dense and convoluted plots that are surprisingly easy to follow, beautifully acted by a repertory company of sprightly performers. This is not eat-your-vegetables cinema. It's juicy, pull-out-the-stops-and-go-for-it cinema, nakedly emotional and wildly melodramatic, more operatic in its emotional pull than most movies ever try to be.

Pedro Almodóvar, Penélope Cruz

Sony Pictures Classics

Almodóvar's movies echo each other with themes that would not be out of place in a Lifetime (The Cable Channel for Women) Movie Marathon—if Lifetime's movies were only a little bloodier and dirtier. His women are either saintly victims of brutish men or saintly avengers of male brutishness. The only way a man is not a brute is if he's in a wheelchair or if he's gay. Amid the rapes and child sexual abuse, there's always time for a mournful song and a group hug of maternal solidarity across generations, classes, and gender preferences.

In *Volver*, we have two succeeding generations of abuse. A teenage daughter kills her father for making moves on her. Only it turns out he's not her father; he assumed the role because her mother was raped by her own father and gave birth to her. The mother, a working-class pixie played by the sex-pot Penélope Cruz, is determined to protect her pseudo-parricidal daughter, in part because her own mother closed her eyes to the abuse in her home. Penélope enlists the aid of her friend the neighborhood hooker in burying her dead husband in a refrigerator down by the river where they used to go spooning.

Meanwhile, Penélope's dead mother returns from the dead. Only she's not dead. It turns out *she* killed her husband (Penélope's incestuous father) and his girlfriend once she found out he had abused Penélope. She set their tryst-making shack on fire, then made it look as though she had died in the fire as well.

I suppose this plot could be the source of a great film, just as any storyline could be the source of any great work of art. And certainly *Volver* is being discussed as though it transcends its roots in melodramatic trash and reaches a higher and more mysterious artistic plane. But it doesn't. Actually, it's just ridiculously unconvincing—a Girl Power fantasia that doesn't even make a modicum of sense on its own terms.

In the 1960s, movie critics and others looked to European and other foreign films because they wanted the medium to rise above the common level of Hollywood trash and achieve greatness comparable to novels, poetry, and painting. The cinema can't really support those lofty ambitions. But at least those were *ambitions*. If Pedro Almodóvar is, by common assent, the world's greatest living filmmaker, then that means movie critics no longer have expectations or hopes for the cinema. Greatness just means wallowing in swill. And while the movies can't be Tolstoy, they certainly can be a great deal more than Danielle Steel in Spanish, with English subtitles. ♦

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Parody

Starting this month, Virginia State Police have banned the "10 codes" used by generations of officers to flag everything from murders to bathroom breaks. Gone is the language of "10-4" and "What's your 10-20 [location]?" . . .
[Trooper Steve] Mittendorff said he worries about troopers encountering greater danger now that their coded language has been stripped bare for anyone with a police scanner to understand.
"The public never knew what we were talking about," he said.

—Washington Post, *November 13, 2006*

VIRGINIA STATE POLICE
CODE BOOK 1997-98

(Continued)

10-70 – Officer(s) at Dunkin' Donuts
10-71 – Suspect refuses to remove license from plastic slipcase
10-72 – Restaurant offers police discount
10-73 – Restaurant does not offer police discount
10-74 – Suspect requires inducement to cooperate with police
10-75 – Cat in tree
10-76 – Khrushchev's due at Idlewild
10-77 – Officer requires corroborative testimony
10-78 – Suspects necking in parked vehicle
10-79 – Intoxicated woman with friendly demeanor
10-80 – Officer(s) attending to essential FOP business
10-81 – Left-hand turn in 25 mph zone
10-82 – Officer observes Gene Kelly perform "Singin' in the Rain"
10-83 – Paperwork
10-84 – Officer required for high-school basketball game
10-85 – Materials lost in evidence room
10-86 – Bum on bench
10-87 – School crossing guard confused
10-88 – Squad car required for essential personal business
10-89 – Involuntary handcuff attachment

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